

Chapter 14: Greetings to the Latrea House

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Part 1

I thought we should go for a family vacation.

The children are steadily growing up.

Lucy has grown accustomed to the Magic University.

Lara doesn't really like to study, but she's still plenty energetic.

Ars is somewhat wild like Eris but he's quite diligent in what he does, and he's not one to pick on those smaller than him, so he should be fine.

Sieg is still quite small and he's still a crybaby, but since he started being trained by a certain someone, he's gotten somewhat stronger.

Lilly and Chris are still young, but they've recently graduated from breast milk and have begun their education.

There's not yet a seventh, but the 6 of them are still young children.

Everyday is lively and the problems never stop.

That said, Lara and Ars have begun to go to school, and Sieg and Lilly have begun to walk, so after all of them began their studies, things have quieted down somewhat.

There's no signs that Hitogami might be plotting something.

The truly peaceful days have continued.

So that might be why.

Why I thought that it might be time to show the children the world outside of the Magic City Sharia.

I wonder why I suddenly thought that.

Maybe because that night was particularly lively.

Lucy was keeping to herself.

Lara was playing with her food.

Ars was being picky.

Sieg was stuffing his cheeks.

Lilly was cutely sipping her soup while dirtying her bib.

And Chris was on my lap with her mouth open wide waiting for her next bite of food.

As well as three wives, one little sister and two mothers.

It was lively dinner table.

But it's not just dinner time, lately the house is always lively.

But that's a given.

With 6 children there's no way it wouldn't be.

Ars and Lara are rascals that love to cause trouble.

Lily and Chris, maybe because they're the same age, often get into loud fights.

Lucy has it together and Sieg is rather docile, but that doesn't mean they're always quiet.

The noise never dies down.

So that's when I thought:

As long as we have the chance.

I have no idea what will happen when the children grow up.

I might be somewhere fighting someone with Orsted, or some of them might have left Sharia.

When they get older, they'll be going to School in the Asura Empire for three years, so they might settle down there.

Or they might even decide to leave the house by themselves before that.

Paul also fought with his father and left.

Something similar might happen to me.

Hitogami also has it in for me, so there are plenty of times that he could interfere.

But children never do exactly as they're told.

Lara doesn't like studying or training so she often runs away.

But that's fine.

In any case, that's what I thought.

That the children won't all be together forever.

That's why, we should take a family vacation while we can.

Part 2

Of course, it's not as if we'll be circumnavigating the world.

For about a month we'll visit some people we haven't seen in a while and show the kids something different.

Nothing too adventurous.

So with that said, the destination is the Millis Continent.

The plan is as follows:

First we use the Teleport Magic Formation to transfer to the Holy Millis Kingdom.

There we'll stay there for about 10 days.

The first half will be with Zenith's parents and Cliff and the church.

After that is a field trip to the Adventurers Guild HQ, the Magic Tower, and other places the city is famous for.

Next is a trip by carriage along the Holy Sword Highway for a quick stop off at the Great Forest.

Then a visit to the hot springs in the Azure Dragon Mountain range.

And finally we return home via the Teleport circle around there.

And while we're there I'll make contact with the Ore God that I had put off meeting up till now.
It should go something like that.

We've already discussed it as a family and have been planning for half a year.
Roxy has her job as a teacher after all, and I had to consult Orsted as the company president.
The kids also have their studies, everyone has plans.

That said, the entire family had agreed.

Lucy especially, she may have gotten the idea when we visited the Asura Empire before, when she heard that we're going on a trip she was really excited.

I already asked Elinalise if she wanted to come along and she made her feelings rather apparent.
She was quite happy to have an excuse.

She goes to see Cliff a number of times throughout the year, but she would much rather be with him all the time.
Cliff also wants to move up the ranks faster so he can bring Elinalise and Clive to him, but the Millis Church's power struggles seem like quite the ordeal.

And since we're going to be visiting the Latrea house, Zenith and Lilia are coming too.

I'd like to have the Miko tell me what she's been thinking again.

Lara can apparently converse with her, but she doesn't talk about it all that much.

Whenever I ask her, she just looks like it's a pain.

At her age she might not understand the importance.

Leaving Lara aside, although it may be personal business, the Miko and Pope are Millis officials so I did make appointments to meet with them, so there's a good chance I'll be able to see her.

This time I've also asked Norn to come.

I promised Claire I would last time after all.

No, I don't think I promised.

In any case, I decided it would be better to take her along while she's still in the happy aftermath of her marriage.
And I've already conveyed the fact that she's married.

No matter who the recipient is, my words will not waver. Including the fact that he's from a Magic Race.

I still haven't gotten a response, she might be mad.

She might just be pretending she didn't hear.

But, it's probably a matter of race.

At first Norn refused on the grounds that her child was still young.

Maybe because Sperd children mature fast but, Norn's daughter Luicelia was already off breast milk and had all her teeth. Her hair is green like her father and she's just started taking steps swinging around her cute tail, but she had yet to open her eye.

But Ruijerd said something to her.

"I'll look after Luicelia. You should go."

"But..."

"You have to treasure your family."

And so Norn listened to those words heavy with emotion.

It seemed like Ruijerd wanted to go himself.

"Although I am somewhat oblivious to Human customs, a greeting is at least necessary," he said.

But bringing along both a baby and a Sperd along on a month long trip would be a little difficult.

Although we could put a hat on them like Sieg, we can't hide the tail, and it's not just the green hair, but a real Sperd...

There's no way we wouldn't create a ruckus wherever we went.

And there's also Ruijerd's assignment from the Beheil Kingdom.
And so, although he was somewhat downtrodden, he sent Norn off.

"I understand. But I'm only going to greet them. I won't be going to the hot springs, I'll be returning home."

"You don't have to leave, Just take your time."

"I want to be together with Ruijerd-san and Luicelia."

And so, Norn, while bragging as such, agreed to come along.

I've left Zanoba and a few members of the Mercenary corps to house sit.

Beet and Jiro are home, but just in case.

I'd be troubled if we got robbed and there's also the care of the vegetable garden.

So that's what our travel plans look like.

It's somewhat roundabout, but sticking to a strict schedule isn't as fun.

About this much is perfect.

Part 3

It's been half a year since then.

It's snowing as always in Magic City Sharia

We called a carriage and we're now riding through the snow laden city towards the office.

After giving our greetings to Orsted we went through the teleport formation to Milishion.

The other end of the teleport circle comes out in a secret hideout in Milishion.

And all of a sudden we're in the Millis continent.

I never strongly felt like I wanted to take a trip.

But since it was possible, I would have liked to take a formation leading to outside the city so we could see it from there.

Witnessing the gargantuan towers, the excitement of walking through the massive ramparts, it's something that has to be experienced.

That said, when we go outside to sightsee, we'll be able to do that then.

There's no rush.

After getting on the carriage I had prepared there earlier, we headed straight towards the Latrea house.

We have 14 people, 15 including me.

Taking that into account, I prepared 2 large carriages.

The first is me, Roxy, Zenith, Lilia, Lara, Chris and Leo.

The second is, Sylphy, Eris, Lucy, Ars, Sieg, Lily, Aisha and Norn.

We had already bid Elinalise and Clive a temporary farewell and the two headed straight for Cliff.

The kids were quite excited to be traveling for the first time, it took some time for their mothers to calm them down.
Lara seemed especially excited by the Milishion scenery.

It was rather surprising considering her usually unimpressed demeanour.

"Lara, don't lean out the window."

"...Ok."

Every now and then she'll start leaning forwards before Roxy tells her to sit back down.

But she still places her head out the window to look around.
I'm worried that she'll suddenly fall out, but Leo is holding onto her clothes so she should be fine.

"...Mama, when we get closer, there are colours everywhere."

"Milishion is home to many famous designers and they create many kinds of clothes aimed towards commoners, everybody here likes to dress up."

"Even though it's winter, there's no snow, it's not even cold."

"Around here, snow doesn't fall that often.

And when the season comes around, it rains heavily.

But that huge tower keeps it at a fixed level so the city never floods."

Hearing Roxy explain things to Lara like that is quite calming.

Seeing the two like this just emphasises their resemblance.

She's almost like a Mini-Roxy.

"Papa, I'm hungry."

Chris is always happy on my lap.

It's just, maybe because she's scared of the outside, or she doesn't like the shaking of the carriage, she's been gripping my sleeve the whole time.

But if I pull it off, she'll probably start crying.

"We'll eat at great-grandmother's house, so just wait till then ok?"

"K."

My words go over smoothly with Chris.

Were it one of her mothers who said so, she would most likely have thrown a tantrum saying she wanted to eat right now.

Sylphy and the others might not like it, but when Chris is around it gives me a sense of superiority.

But when she grabs my hand like that and rubs it on her stomach, it makes me want to go buy her something. Hey, you, stallkeep over there. Give me your most delicious apple, huh? You don't know which one is the most delicious? Then I guess I'll take them all. Don't worry. Whatever's left will be a gift to the Latrea house. Now I kinda want to say it.

Oh right, I brought a bunch of greeting gifts for the Latrea house, but I wonder if Claire will like any?

She wont say something like "I don't want such low class filth in my house," right?

She wouldn't be so rude as to say it right?

While thinking that, I suddenly noticed that Lilia looked rather stiff.

"...Lilia-san, what's the matter?"

"I'm feeling somewhat uneasy."

"About what?"

"Claire-sama."

There's one major obstacle to overcome on this trip.

My grandmother, Claire Latrea.

That obstinate grandmother, when she heard that we'd be staying in Millis, immediately offered to house us.

I'm glad I haven't replied.

Just giving a greeting and not staying at the house was also an option.

When I think about the way she treated Norn, Aisha and Lilia in the past, it makes me uneasy.

But I'm not outright against the old lady's suggestion.

Claire has one fatal weakness, that's my adorable children. I don't think it would be impossible to spend a few days quietly.

So that said, first we should just go check it out and say hello.

And if it seems like it won't work, we can just go stay at an inn.

We came to this conclusion at a family meeting.

Even so, Lilia was still called all kinds of things last time she was here.

So it's not unusual thinking that she might hear it again would make her uneasy

"Claire-san may say those kinds of things, but she is thinking of us. Her thinking may be somewhat inflexible though... But if it comes down to it, you can always just stay behind me."

"No, it's not about me."

Lilia's gaze moves towards Roxy and Lara.

Right this time, Roxy and Lara, in other words, Magic race descendants, are coming.

And Norn also married someone from a Magic race.

And I've also brought all three of my wives this time.

And Claire is an adherent Millis believer from the Demon expulsion faction.

She had previously said that she wouldn't interfere but that was years ago.

People tend to forget small promises over time.

Of course, Roxy has already taken that into consideration.

During the family meeting she had said "There's no problem".

"Lara and Lily may have a somewhat hard time with it, but they already know to some extent that Demons living among humans get that kind of treatment."

Is what she said.

Norn is also prepared for anything she might say.

I'm not worried about any name calling there might be, but I'm scared that if she says something that upsets Lara that she'll do something weird.

I'm scared of her pranks.

Her victims have no limits.

"It will be fine Lilia-san."

Roxy said that.

"If it's not, then we just won't go in at all."

"Is that the case?"

I also have my doubts.

It's not that I don't trust Claire.

She did invite us after all.

I think inviting us over just to insult us would be against noble etiquette. Although I don't know what kind of etiquette they follow in Millis.

But I still don't think they'd invite us over from such a long distance away just to kick us out.

It's just that, although it goes against common sense, you don't know what someone might do when something they don't like is right in front of them.

"..."

Zenith grabbed Lilia's hand.
She didn't say anything, but the meaning was conveyed.
I tapped on Lara's shoulder.

"Obaa-chan what was that?"

Lara looked at me like it was a bother and then at Zenith, and then back at me and said:

"...Great-grandmother just worries a lot, it'll be fine, she says."
"Thanks."

For once she actually passed on the message.
Well if that's what Zenith says, then surely it will be fine.

Part 4

The reception at the manor was welcoming.
The maid was full of smiles and the butler was polite.
At the very least it was more welcoming than the reception I received last time I came to Milishion.
After they took our bags we were guided to Claire's room.

"I thank you for the long journey."

Once Claire saw us, she said that still seated.
Still seated.
Though I won't say her attitude was poor. She's the master of the house after all.

"Not at all, we only just left."
"Of course. Though I'm still having trouble wrapping my head around it..."

Claire pressed her fingers against her temples and looked like she wanted to say something, but she decided against it.
It was probably the fact that I use teleportation magic as if I own it.

"I'll introduce my family."
"Yes. As you see fit."

They all line up.
The children, three wives and Norn and Aisha.
Today Aisha isn't in the maid outfit, but a lovely dress.
At first glance, she could be mistaken for the eldest daughter.
Lilia is the same, but she already moved with Zenith to another room.

"Mary."
"Yes Madam."

Claire gave the order to the maid beside her and put out her hand.
The maid took hold of her hand and slowly helped her to her feet then handed her her walking stick.
She looked rather fragile leaning on her walking stick.
She had none of the fortitude she had previously.
It seems the reason she didn't stand when we walked in wasn't her pride.

"Are you unwell?"

"I'm getting old after all."

"You couldn't possibly be so old that your legs would weaken to such an extent..."

She's might be old enough to be called great-grandmother, but both I, and my kids were all born quite early. I wouldn't go out of my way to ask her age, but since Zenith is about 40, she should be around 60, 70 at most.

"Would you like me to attempt healing magic?"

"No need. You're an outstanding magician, but this is Milishion and I am a noble."

Meaning that this is something that can't be healed with healing magic.

Well if she says it's fine then I won't press it, but I'm somewhat uneasy seeing her like this.

"Rather than your concern, I'd like continue with the introductions."

"That's true."

Well then I guess I should start.

First is Sylphy, Roxy and Eris.

The three wives.

"This is Sylphy. The first wife I married. The house is normally left under her supervision."

"I'm Sylphiette. I thank you for today's invitation. I look forward to staying with you."

As expected of Sylphy, you can see the elegance from her experience with greetings.

Nobody would ever guess that she grew up in the Fittoa countryside.

"This is Roxy. She is from the Migurd Race, a Magic Race, and although she looks as such, she's older than me. She's currently a teacher at the Magic University."

"I'm Roxy. I'm sure you have some thoughts about my race, but still, I look forward to staying with you these next few days."

When I introduced Roxy as a Migurd, Claire didn't even flinch.

This is the first time they've met, but she did already know about it.

I guess she doesn't plan to comment on it for now.

"This is Eris. A Master of the Sword God School. She is a member of the Great Asuran Noble family Boreas and the little sister of the current head."

"I-I'm Eris. It's nice to meet you."

Eris is somewhat flustered.

At the Asuran parties she's always calm but it seems my grandmother makes her nervous.

"..."

Claire doesn't say anything.

She doesn't seem to be planning to scold me for having three wives.

Next is the children.

"This is the Eldest daughter Lucy"

"I'm Lucy Greyrat! Great-grandmother, It is excellent to finally meet you! I am pleased to be staying with you for these next few days!"

Lucy gives greeting while gripping the edge of her skirt.

Claire's face slackens a little.

Even though she's strict with her grandchildren, she can't help but find her great-grandchildren cute.

"The second daughter Lara."

"...I'm Lara."

Lara gives a bored greeting and her face says that it's a pain.

Claire's eyebrows knit back up.

It seems it has nothing to do with the fact that they're her great-grandchildren.

"He's the eldest son Ars."

"I'm Ars! I'll be eight years old soon! Pleased to meet you!"

That said, the only unsociable one is Lara.

The rest of them are all polite and Claire doesn't seem to have any complaints.

After Ars, Sieg, Lily and Chris all gave their greeting normally.

"You two next."

After I prompt them, Norn and Aisha step forward.

Together they gave what you could call an elegant bow.

Norn and of course Aisha.

"I'm Norn Sperdia. It's been quite a while grandmother."

"I'm Aisha. I thank you for the invitation today."

They both give greetings you couldn't offer complains about.

Claire, still leaning on her cane, pointed her chin at the two.

"Yes, it's been quite a while, the two of you."

Just that.

She didn't ask anything about the fact that Norn was married.

Maybe she thought it would be better not to ask here.

In any case, there hasn't been a negative atmosphere just yet.

Most likely because of the fluent greetings.

Good, goo... Aah, Lara is picking her nose.

I'll have to tell her off for that later.

"This is Claire Latrea. She's your great-grandmother. We'll be staying with her for around 10 days so be polite."

After I say that, Claire gives a slight bow.

It's filled with elegance as always.

I'd love for the children to learn from her.

"I am Claire. I am here to welcome you in place of the Manor's master. Please instruct the maids and butlers as you wish. You might find the difference in culture somewhat unpleasant, but please treat this house as if it was your own."

"I thank you for your kindness. Everyone give your thanks."

"Thank you very much! We look forward to staying with you."

The children all bowed at once and Claire sat back down quite pleased.

Good work.

And so, our family vacation in Milishion began.

Part 5

"Rudeus-san, I have something I wish to talk to you about. Do you think you could remain behind?"

Is what I thought, but right as I was about to leave the room, I was called for.
I told the rest of the family to go on without me and stayed back.
Claire's expression was, well, normal.
She didn't seem mad.

"Please sit."

"If you'll excuse me."

I sat down in the chair in front of her as told.
And as if there was some kind of switch in the chair, someone came out with tea.
They didn't bring out tea for my family, but I guess we weren't sitting down.
There weren't enough seats after all.

"There's no need to be so punctilious. I have no intentions of reprimanding you."

It seems I've been seen though.
But considering how she was before, I hope she'll overlook me being somewhat wary.

"Then what do you wish to talk about."
"Simply idle conversation."

I stole a look at her face.
There was nothing behind her expression and she simply sipped her tea.
The way she drank was captivating.
There's probably some etiquette behind the way she drinks her tea.

I drank too while trying to mimic it.
They've used some good tea leaves.

"Speaking of tea... Lately Aisha has started raising a tea plant. I've brought a bag of the leaves with me, you should try it."

"Then we shall do that tomorrow."
"They're quite nice."

Aisha frequently changes what she's growing.
At one point she was growing some kind of herb, she even cooked with it, but she suddenly stopped.
I wonder why?
Ah, right. Chris was allergic to it wasn't she.
When the herbs started to become fragment, her nose would start dripping.
Although healing Magic could fix the symptoms, it couldn't get rid of the allergy itself.

"Is Aisha still not married?"
"That seems to be the case."
"But it seems Norn did."
"Yes."
"What kind of person is he?"

I thought I had gotten past it, but it seems I can't avoid this topic.
But I'm glad Norn isn't here and she's asking me.

"He's of a Magic race."

I had already said so in the letter.

Thinking that it would be pointless to gloss over it, I said that.

"I am already aware. Although he doesn't seem to be here today. What kind of person is he?"

Oh, she meant that.

He did let his just married wife out by herself.

So she wants to know why he's not here.

"Their child is still small, so he's looking after the house. He told Norn that at least she should go and see her grandmother. It's definitely not because he's looking down on you or the Latrea house..."

Claire's eyebrows knitted together.

"I didn't ask why he's not here, I wish to know what kind of person he is."

"Eh? Aah, Of course, he's a man worthy of trust. I'm sure I wrote this in my letter, He's an ally of the weak and doesn't tolerate hate. He has a strong sense of justice. Their idea of status is somewhat different from Humans' but he's the captain of an elite unit in a large scale army, so he has a somewhat high position in the village. Aah, on top of that, one of the 『Demon God Slaying Three Heroes』 Pergius-sama has his eyes on him. Also..."

"...That's enough."

Claire stops me half way through and looks me in the eyes.

Did I say something bad?

"Just from what you've said just now, I can tell you've left Norn in the hands of someone you trust. And if that's the case, although I have some thoughts on the matter, it's not my place to say them."

"I'm thankful you say that."

"There's no need for that. I had already promised you that I wouldn't interfere."

"So you did remember."

"Of course. My back may be failing me, but my mind is as sharp as ever."

That's good.

But I wonder why she was asking about that...

Because we're simply making idle conversation aren't we.

"In any case, Roxy-san is awfully small isn't she."

"It's a trait of the Migurd Race. They are much older than they look. Aah, but it's forbidden to call her that to her face. She's quite mindful of it."

"I understand that. I am a woman of the Latrea house. My mouth may be foul, but I will not find fault with other's appearances."

I had half meant it as a joke, but apparently she took me seriously.

"And since the previous incident, I thought it ideal to learn more about the Magic and Beast Races."

"I think that's a fine goal. Whether you love or hate something, knowledge itself is important."

Rather, it's possible to end up hating something simply because it's unknown to you.

It's human nature to fear the unknown.

We're a group that acts before learning.

"But, that Lara girl is a problem isn't she."

"...Yes."

"Of course I'm not talking about the fact that she's half Magic Race. It's about her attitude towards someone she's meeting for the first time."

"I am sorry about that. I thought she'd be fine with at least a greeting, but lately she hasn't been doing as she's told."

"...I won't say too much about it. But it's my outlook that strict discipline is appropriate where necessary."

She was somewhat roundabout when saying it, but she's probably telling me that physical punishment would be necessary.

Well that are times when that might be better.

It's just that Lara is already quite experienced with that.

Eris is in charge of spankings after all.

She may look wild, but Eris is quite calculating

"You should understand why I say so."

"For the future."

"Exactly. A first impression is extremely important, it can change someone's mental image of you. So you don't exhaust their initial good will, and to avoid dissatisfaction down the line"

It's starting to sound like a lecture.

But somehow it seems like Claire is enjoying herself.

"But her mother, Roxy-san despite the fact that she's from a Magic race, she seems to be well aware."

"How so?"

"When standing next to the legal wife Sylphy-san, she was always a step back. Her reserved greeting was also good. Her attitude displays that she knows her position."

So it was about that.

I have no intention of labelling them as legal and secondary or numbering them...

No, that's not it.

The problem is that Roxy is thinking like that in the first place.

"Eris-san... is a soldier after all, so her attitude can't be helped."

"I'm glad you think as such."

"..."

Claire looks like she's about to give another lecture.

I'd appreciate it if she didn't say too much.

Eris is trying her best after all.

"In any case Rudeus-san."

"Yes?"

"I thank you for bringing them along."

Claire said that as she bowed her head.

I won't ask who.

It's not Norn or Aisha or Roxy.

It's no one in particular.

It's everyone.

At the same time I realised her meaning, I understood.

That I was a bit too on guard.

That I should have looked at this more lightly, like a trip to grandma's house.

And so, our family vacation in Millis began.

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Chapter 15: Ars's Millis Tour

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Part 1

Ars was bored so he decided that he wanted to walk around town alone.

When he first got here, what first caught his eye were the numerous towers.

According to White Mama, they're huge Magic Tools, and it's because of them that the city has remained peaceful for so many years.

After that was the shining silver building.

According to Red Mama, that's the Adventurers Guild HQ, and most adventurers will visit it at least once.

He absolutely wanted to go to those two.

Of course, if he told his father, he would take him there.

Just today, after he said he wanted to see the sparkly gold building, he took the smiling Ars along with him.

But once they were inside, he didn't let Ars walk around freely.

After they went in, Ars was running all around with curiosity in his eyes, but his father threw all kinds of limitations at him, "You can't touch that," "You can't go there."

Honestly, Ars thought they were too restricting, and boring.

But what Ars didn't know was that the Millis Church was already very considerate of Rudeus.

The Millis Cathedral, especially the Inner Sanctum, are places only those with special permission may enter.

Under no normal circumstances would they allow rowdy children to enter.

But Ars was still a child.

He thought that as long as he asked to go to the tower or the silver building, he'd be able to go.

But he realised that his movements would be restricted like today.

That's all he thought.

And so, when his father and the others left for the Inner Sanctum with the guards and the woman with the big chest, He and the other children were told to play in the gardens until they came back, he saw his chance.

(Let's see how close I can get to the silver building and the tower.)

Thinking about it, his entire life had been restricted by his parents.

"Don't go there," "Don't walk around town alone."

Whenever he went out, he was always with Aisha or Leo.

Since he was little, he had readily obeyed, and even now he didn't intend to oppose.

Although he didn't completely understand the intention of his mothers, even though he was a child, he knew it was to teach and protect him.

He knew that it was dangerous to go outside, and that he shouldn't go alone.

He didn't necessarily hate having to go together with Aisha.

But even so.

Sometimes he just felt like he wanted to go somewhere without someone watching him.

"Hey, Lara-nee, let's slip out. You wanna go take a look at the silver building and the tower?"

And so the one Ars chose to invite was Lara.

For a change, Lara was alone today.

Leo was with the Guardian beast of the girl they called Miko, the Snowy Owl, and had left Lara behind.

And so Lara was also thinking that this was her chance.

Lara and Leo have always been close.

And even now, she had never disliked that.

But he followed her everywhere, and was always warning her about her actions, so lately she had been thinking that it was a little irritating.

So when she heard Ars' invitation, the edges of her mouth raised just a tad and she nodded.

"I thought that too."

And so the two began to put their plan into action behind Aisha's back.

They timed their escape for when Chris shouted "Papa's gone!" and started crying and they moved to a bush, running from shadow to shadow towards the exit.

"Hey, where are you two going?"

And the one who had spotted them was Sieg.

"Shhh, we're just going out to play a little."

"They'll get mad at you if you go outside."

"I know that you've been sneaking out the back by yourself lately."

"I-I did not..."

Ars knew.

Sieg was always going out by himself.

But he didn't know why he wasn't being scolded for going out by himself.

Ars thought that because he never saw him leaving with Aisha or Leo.

And so he was a little annoyed that his little brother was the only one allowed out alone.

In actual fact, Sieg wasn't alone.
Sieg, and of course Ars didn't know, that when he sneaks out of the house, a Rudo Mercenary is always secretly guarding him.
Of course, under the orders of the worrywart Rudeus.

"So if you want me to stay quiet, so will you."
"...Ok."
"We'll be fine, we're only going to the silver building and that huge tower to take a look."
"Eh, you're going to the adventurers guild?"

Hearing him say silver building, Sieg's eye's shone.
He had heard many a heroic tale from Alek.
And many of them ended up at the Adventurers HQ so he had an extraordinary curiosity.

"Yeah."
"Then, I want to go too!"

And so Ars and the other's left the Millis cathedral.
With mischievous hearts and full of curiosity.

Part 2

Ars, with Sieg and Lara in tow, headed towards the town.
The architecture was completely different to that of Sharia's, and was filled with all kinds of houses and buildings with odd shapes; it set Ars's heart on fire.
They had seen a lot of it in the carriage ride here, but there was something different about seeing on your own two feet.
Just having the pavement under you is a big change.
Even walking around a new city is exciting by itself.

A group consisting entirely of children, especially Sieg with his green hair, stood out, but they didn't mind it.
They had gotten quite used to those gazes in Sharia.

"Lara-nee, you have to walk forward. It's dangerous."
"K."

Lara responded, but kept looking around with sparkling eyes.
She was even more entranced than Ars at the tidy city.

"Hey, do you think we should have invited Lucy-nee? If we get separated, she'll get mad at us."
"If we had told her where we were going, she would have stopped us."

Sieg was always quite a coward.
And even though he'd been training by himself and gotten quite good with a sword, Ars still couldn't figure out why he was still scared of everything.

"Ahh Lara-nee! What's that!"

What Ars was pointing at was a strange work of art.
It was a green sculpture in the shape of a owl.
It looked somewhat similar to the white bird they had seen, but it was obviously artificial and a little ominous.
Lara looked at it and answered with confidence:

“...That’s a fountain.”

“There’s no way someone would make a fountain that looks like that.”

“But it’s a fountain.”

“Eeh... That can’t be right...”

But just as Ars went to inspect it, water squirted out of its mouth.

“Aah, It really is a fountain! Amazing! How did you know!?”

“I saw one similar at Juli-san’s place.”

That was one of Rudeus’s 『Byproducts』 The Merlion wind fountain.

It was based on the Miko’s guardian beast Nurse and was presented to her upon its completion.

That said, putting something like that in the Church’s Headquarters would be troublesome,

But because of it’s stuffed animal like qualities, the Miko complained that she wanted it close by, and so it was installed near the Church for the townspeople to enjoy.

“Ohh.”

Seeing Ars and Sieg’s gazes of interest, Lara puffed her chest out with pride.

As the three continued their conversation, they crossed a bridge.

And as they did, the scenery around was quite different.

The buildings were smaller and there were more people.

You could even see people carrying swords or walking around armoured in large numbers.

The rugged hard faced people seemed to have increased.

They had crossed from the Sacred ward to the Adventurers ward.

“It got kinda normal.”

“Yeah.”

But it was a scene that they had already gotten used to in Sharia.

Although they could be called muscular and rugged, compared to the Rudo Mercenaries, they looked rather weak.

Not to mention Red Mama.

“Lara-nee, which way was the silver one?”

“Hm. This way.”

“Alright, let’s go!”

The exuberant Ars walked forward followed by an excited Sieg with a somewhat sleepy looking Lara behind them with a little smile on her face.

“Wow, amazing!”

“Aah!”

Once they arrived at the main street, the Adventurers Guild HQ immediately came into view.

It was a giant silver building placed right in the centre of the street. There was no way you could miss it.

“Ar-nii! Hurry up!”

Sieg ran forward in high spirits.

A complete 180 from his previous opposition.

No matter what he said, there was no way he could fight against the charm of the 『Adventurers Guild HQ』 That was the start of so many legends.

"Aah, wait!"

Ars and Lara, with anticipation in their face once more, chased after him.

They wanted to get a closer look as quick as possible.

Seeing the children suddenly start running, those around them suddenly thought "Danger".

The result of children running was usually bumping into someone or getting run over by a carriage.

But they completely overturned the people's' assumptions and the three children skilfully weaved through the crowd of people.

And they even stayed to the side where the carriages didn't pass.

That was the result of daily training.

Part 3

"Woah~!"

After arriving at the staircase in front of the entrance, Sieg let out an excited shout.

It wasn't though they hadn't seen a building of this scale before.

The Magic University in Sharia was a structure of impressive stature.

But there was just something different about it.

The Adventurers guild HQ was silver and incredibly shiny.

The Magic University was filled with reds and browns, kind of like a potato.

"Ar-nii, it's the Adventurers Guild!"

"Yeah, it's the Adventurers Guild!"

"It's completely different from ours!"

"Ours is shoddy compared to this!"

"But this smell inside is the same."

"Yeah, it does smell."

Muttering some rude remarks, they walked through the gate.

Very quietly.

Some of the dim-witted adventurers liked to pick fights with children who walk into the guild.

That was something that Blue Mama had told them.

Ars was basically wishing for a fight, but if he started one after already sneaking out, Red Mama would get mad.

Red Mama is scary when she's angry. She'll spank your behind until it's bright red.

And if Sieg or Lara got hurt, Red Mama wouldn't be the only one angry.

Making Blue Mama or White Mama angry, the thought had Ars shaking in his boots.

But thinking that he might get to see Papa angry, made him kind of want to start a fight.

Up until now, Papa would always be complimenting or pampering them, rarely would he scold anyone.

They had never seen Papa truly angry before.

"Wow~"

The inside of the guild was just as splendid as the outside would suggest.

The inside felt amateurish but also composed, and there were a lot of desks.

The number of adventurers was also completely different to outside.

In the Magic City Sharia all the magicians seemed like beginners, and all the warriors and healers were quite

skilled.

But here it was the opposite. The ones that looked like beginners were the warriors and healers but all the magicians looked experienced.

"Ars."

Seeing that Ars was satisfied by the scenery in front of him, Lara called out from behind.

"There are 3 more floors."

Lara pointed at the information board in front of the stairs.

It outlined the purposes of each of the floors.

The first floor was a reception and a meeting place, the second floor was a store where you could buy equipment and raw materials directly from the guild, the third floor was restaurant, and the fourth floor was a guild room for large scale events and meetings.

"Let's go up!"

But as Ars began walking towards the stairs, a shadow was cast over them.

When he turned around, a woman caked in makeup with huge breasts was standing there.

"This isn't a playground. What'd you come here for?"

"S-Sightseeing! We've come from Ranoa Kingdom..."

The reason he managed to reply right away, was because his Papa had told he what to say.

"Your parents?"

"I-it's just us right now."

"Right... Then, how about I guide you around? Although I may not look it, I'm a staff member here. Today my shift ended in the morning, so how about it?"

After she said that, she showed them the crest on her shoulder.

It was the same one as the people from the reception.

"T-then please do."

Ars's heart was pounding.

Ars loved voluptuous breasts.

Of course, he didn't hate small ones, but he liked big ones better.

The woman in front of them was about the same level as Aisha, which was a size sufficient to cause Ars's heart to pound.

"Alright then, leave it to me. Ok? The first floor, as you can see, is the reception area."

The woman began explaining all kinds of things with a friendly smile.

The three of them followed her around on their tour of the Adventurers Guild HQ.

First floor, second floor, third floor, fourth floor...

The woman guided them around so politely that you would never imagine she was dealing with children.

They had intended to move around freely, but they ended up with a guide.

They had strayed from their plans, but everything they saw was fresh.

Especially the guild room which Sharia's guild hall didn't have. It was so lavishly designed that you wouldn't imagine it belonged to adventurers.

"And that's the end. Did you have fun?"

Right after she was done, she turned towards Ars and said that.

"Yes, it was interesting! Thank you very much!"

"You don't need to thank me... So what are you doing after this? Are you going to meet your mum and dad?"

"N-no..."

"Hmm. Then would you like me to walk you home?"

"That's fine. We'll go home by ourselves!"

He turned her down because they had yet to see the tower.

He lied to her, but if they started walking to a different part of the town, she would surely notice.

There was no way they could go home without completing their objectives.

And so, Ars and the others left the Adventurers Guild.

Their plans had changed slightly but it turned out alright in the end.

"Now then, on to the next one!"

Ars was pointing not just at the tower, but the sun which had passed noon was beginning to fall.

Part 4

They saw all kinds of things on their way to the tower.

A complex aqueduct, on top of which were small boats.

A carriage carrying large amount of what looked like monster materials.

And protecting it was a crowd of adventurers.

They would shout in excitement whenever something caught their interest and were enjoying their field trip quite thoroughly.

But because of all their dawdling, the tower which should have been quite close, was still surprisingly far.

By the time they had arrived there, it was already dusk.

"Wow~, it's huge..."

Seeing the tower at night from this close up was overwhelming for them.

It was so thick that it took them several minutes to circle the whole thing, and it was so tall you couldn't see the top.

And when you looked at it close up, you could see faint symbols carved on the whole thing.

Although the Magic Tool wasn't comprised of the whole tower, to protect the Magic Tool on the inside, large scale barrier magic was carved around the tower.

Of course, Ars didn't know that.

He simply thought that Lily would have liked to see this kind of thing.

"Ar-nii, it seems they won't let us inside after all."

"I see. Well I guess it can't be helped."

Although Sieg had managed to find the entrance, there were two soldiers guarding it, it seemed no one was allowed inside.

That's a matter of course.

Ars did want to see the scenery from the top of the tower, but since it seemed impossible, he had the judgement to

give up there.

"Haa... Well then, let's head home!"

"Yeah!"

"K!"

Ars gave a triumphant shout and began to walk back so Lara and Sieg followed.

"Lara-nee, it was so much fun!"

"Yeah. It was fun. That dragon head mounted in the guild room, I want one too."

"Alright, when I get bigger I'll get one for you."

"I'll help too."

They were delighted to see all kinds of things they wouldn't normally have.

Sieg was especially excited and had been continuously been talking at Lara.

But while they were walking Ars was suddenly assaulted with unease.

Could it be.

No, it can't...

"Hey, Ar-nii, remember that giant sword mounted on the wall in the Adventurers Guild, do you know what it is?"

"No?"

"It was one of the 48 Magic Swords."

"You sure know a lot."

"It was being used as a decoration, so it was probably a fake, Alek-san once drew a picture for me."

"Hmph..."

"Aah, wait up!"

Ars gave Sieg a rude reply and walked faster.

Sieg was confused at Ars's sudden silence but kept talking to Lara.

Lara was slightly curious about Ars's demeanour but she didn't do anything about it and just kept listening to Sieg.

The three continued to walk.

They frequently trained so no one complained that they were tired or their feet hurt.

But seeing Ars walk in front of him silently, Sieg inevitably got quieter.

Before long he stopped talking entirely and the three walked in silence.

Slowly through the night.

And so, the day ended.

Part 5

Several minutes after the sun had set.

The three were standing in a dark alley.

There were no traces of people in the silence around them

"Hey, Ar-nii, how much farther is it?"

"...How should I know."

Ars didn't intend for it to turn out like this.

It's not like he didn't think of the trip home.

On the way there they would aim for the huge tower, and on the way back they would aim for the shiny gold building. It's a golden building after all.

It stands out from quite a distance, and they would just be returning along the path they had already come. That's what he had thought.

But the second the sun began to set, everything was dyed yellow.

And the long shadows cast by the evening sun, erased any traces of the path they walked.

The fact that they had stopped to look at all kinds of things on the way there also had a part to play.

"What do you mean you don't—"

"Shut up! I don't know what I don't know!"

Ars yelled at him and Sieg shook a little.

Hearing his reliable brother yell at him, Sieg realised just how serious the situation was, and tears started to seep out of the corner of his eyes.

He may have started training with Alek, but he was still a young child.

He was also normally a good kid and wasn't used to being yelled at.

"Ars."

Lara quietly said that to Ars.

Ars looked behind him.

He saw Sieg with tears in his eyes and the still expressionless Lara.

But in Lara's eyes he could see a small amount of anger.

"...I'm sorry, Lara-nee, we're lost."

"Yup."

"Do you know how to get back?"

"...I don't."

Lara feebly shook her head.

Lara always looked like nothing could faze her, but now she had none of her usual arrogance.

Ars felt somewhat hopeless seeing her like that.

But he didn't cry, nor did he complain, instead he clenched his fist.

"E-Everything will be fine! Leave it to me!"

This was something he started.

So he had to fix it himself.

That's what he thought.

Ars took Lara and Sieg's hand and gripped them tightly.

To relieve the other two, he mustered up his non-existent wisdom, and thought.

Blue Mama had once said:

When you're in trouble, don't panic. First think of what you can do.

"Umm... Right, when we left the big street, there were people there, we'll just ask them how to get there. The shiny gold building isn't that far, they should know where it is."

It had only just turned night.

When they left main street, there were still plenty of people, it should be easy to ask one of them.

Blue Mama had also said this:

If you don't know something, don't be afraid to ask someone.

"...What if the people are mean and don't tell us?"

Ars didn't know how to refute Sieg's negative declaration.

He didn't think they wouldn't know, but he couldn't say the possibility of someone not telling them was zero.

Continuing Blue Mama's previous statement:

But it's not as if people will tell you anything you ask, there's a possibility they might lie, so you have to be careful.

"If that happens... Ah, right! Papa told us "If you ever get lost in the city, just go find a church, if you throw out uncle Cliff's name they'll help you out! Priests can't lie to us right?"

"Ah... That's right!"

A priest still could lie to them,

But the image that came to his mind was Clive's father, Cliff.

And although they had only met a few times, in his mind Cliff was a person who would never lie.

"Well then, let's go home."

"It'll be fine so don't cry. Cheddar Man doesn't cry."

"I-I'm not crying."

Strength returned to Sieg's face, and Ars looked like he had a bit more energy.

And Lara who now looked much livelier, gave an encouraging smile.

"Alright."

So first is main street or a church.

There were no people around them, but if they ran into anyone on the way, they could just ask them.

That much would be simple.

But along with that thought, Ars had a different sense of unease.

Not only had he gone and gotten lost, he had gotten Lara and Sieg dragged along with him.

His mothers would definitely be disappointed.

Red Mama would be especially angry.

Even Blue Mama and White Mama would.

Normally Aisha would cover for them and try to soften the blow, but this time they had snuck out under Aisha's watch.

There was no way she'd be on their side.

"Eeh..."

"Ars, are you crying?"

Lara peeked in front of Ars's face.

Ars wiped the tears off his face with his sleeve.

"I-I'm not crying. There's just some dirt in my eye! Lara-nee, don't go anywhere! If we get separated here, it's over!"

"...K, got it. You sure are reliable."

"Stop it. It's my fault this happened."

"It's my fault too."

Lara pat him on the head and he reddened slightly before facing forward.

They quickly started walking.

Staying in the gloomy empty alley, really was about to make him cry.

There was no doubt that they were going to get scolded.

He had prepared himself for that.

Aisha would probably be mad at him too, but he remembered to make sure to apologise.

And the second they turned the corner.

“Whoops.”

They ran into a woman.

One with a voluptuous chest.

Seeing a chest of familiar size, Ars reflexively made a sound.

“Aah...”

“Hmm? You’re the kid...”

It was the woman who had guided them around the Adventurers Guild HQ that afternoon.

“O-Onee-san? Why?”

“Huh? Why else. I’m heading home after work, my house is this way after all. What about you? It’s already dark, if you don’t get home your parents will get mad.”

Ars was relieved.

Because someone they knew had appeared.

Hell is merciful... was a phrase that Ars didn’t know, but for now their future looked better.

“Um, we got lost. Do you know where the main street, no a church or the shiny gold building is?”

“Shiny gold, do you mean the cathedral?”

“Right, that one! Cathedral!”

“Of course I know. There’s no one who lives in this city that wouldn’t.”

Ars and Sieg looked at each other.

But then Ars calmed his expression and cleared his throat.

He had lessons from White Mama on how to act when asking people for something.

“Um, do you think you could guide us there? I’m sure our father would reward you.”

“...Silly, lost children shouldn’t be so formal. Come on, follow me.”

Ars remembered.

White Mama once said:

Connections between people are important.

Someone who you might have only just met, could end up coming to your aid when you need it.

Surely she was talking about this.

Ars matured just a little that day.

Part 6

“We’re here.”

And so the three of them had arrived at their destination under the guidance of the woman.

“Eeh?”

Is what they had thought.

The scene in front of them was that of a dark alley.

There wasn't a single trace of anyone around them, the walls were scrawled with obscenities and the trash covered floor gave an overwhelming odour.

No matter how dark it was, he could tell there was no shiny gold building around them.

"Umm, Where? Eeh?"

"That's no good. Didn't your parents tell you not to follow around people you don't know?"

Hearing footsteps suddenly surround them, Ars was shaking.

They were surrounded by vulgar laughs and a number of men.

Ars could tell that they were planning on kidnapping them.

And even though he had realised that, his thoughts were still a mess.

The woman was a staff member at the Adventurers Guild and had kindly guided them around.

So why...

She had said she had gotten off work, but she said the same thing at noon...

"You lied about working at the guild!"

"I didn't lie to you. This is a side job. Just a little bit of extra money. There are lots of kids like you in this city.

Orphans who want to become adventurers and come to the guild but leave without joining. And once they leave, if they can't make it back home before dark, this is what happens."

"Dammit!"

Ars immediately picked up a broken stick from the ground and took a stance to protect his brother and sister.

"Ar-nii..."

Sieg was shaking while holding onto Ars's sleeve.

Lara was expressionless as always, but she looked somewhat pale.

He couldn't even protect the two of them.

It was his fault it ended up like this.

It was his mistaken judgement.

But now, what could he do right now?

What had his mothers told him... What... What...!?

"ANYONE! IS ANYONE HERE! WE'RE BEING KIDNAPPED! PLEASE HELP!"

Ars shouted.

If anything happens, before you think about fighting, look for help.

That was what Blue Mama had said, or was it White Mama?

Or maybe Aisha.

No, it was probably something his Papa had said.

"Cry and scream all you want, no one's coming."

Ars could tell that was the case and immediately moved to his next line of thinking.

What he remembered next, was something Red Mama taught him.

『First, carefully observe the enemy.』

Ars remained on guard and calmly looked around.

The alley was a dead end. There one person in front of him and two behind him. They all had swords. But compared to Red Mama, they were weaklings.

They had no presence nor bloodthirst.

They were at a level common in Sharia.

They were small fry that would piss themselves and run in front of Red Mama.

All he had on hand was a stick that looked like it would break after one hit, but he had already been trained in unarmed combat and he could somewhat use magic.

If he did as he practiced, he could surely win.

Surely, probably, it will be fine, probably.

"Ar-nii, are you going to fight...? I-I'll fight t-to."

"You stay back Sieg!"

Although that's what he said, Ars's knees were shaking.

The stick in his hands was shaking, his breathing was rough and he looked like he was about to burst into tears.

He was about to fight three adults in pure darkness.

And on top of that, he had to protect his brother and sister.

That kind of pressure was a first for Ars.

"Ooooh, what a brave big brother. But there's no way you can win you know? Although these guys are ex-adventurers, their skills are the real deal."

"Shut up! Don't you touch them!"

"Haa, don't hurt them too much. These kids come from somewhere high up, so we'll get quite the ransom for them."

The two responded with a "Yes Ma'am," and charged at them.

Ars felt his stomach tighten,

And as he turned around and put as much mana into his fist as possible—

Clap Clap Clap

When something broke the silence.

It was the sound of clapping.

It came from behind the two men encircling them, and everyone stopped moving.

At the same time, a white lump jumped over the two men.

After it did a quick once around of the situation, it sniffed Lara to make sure she wasn't injured, and turned to the men and snarled.

"GRRRRRRR..."

"LEO!"

It was Leo.

But the once clapping wasn't him.

Because he didn't have hands.

"Alright. That's enough~"

It was a familiar voice.

A voice so familiar there wasn't a day that went by without it.

With her dazzling brown hair and a fang¹ that fit her, she walked out of the darkness.

Dressed in a maid outfit, protruding her huge chest, holding a lantern.

"Aisha-nee!"

Ars called out her name.

She wasn't his sister.

She wasn't his sister, but if he called her aunt, she would get angry.

"Taadaa Ars-kun, I've come to save you."

Seeing her carefree smile, Ars was about to cry.

But Ars and the others weren't the only ones relieved.

Seeing that their opponent coming from the darkness was a big dog and a maid the men became confident again.

"Bitch, who's maid are you..."

"The Greyrat house.

Aah, around here it would be better to say the Latrea house.

The family of Carlyle Latrea who has long served the Holy Knights. You've heard of them right?"

The Holy Knights.

Hearing that name, the men were suddenly flustered.

The men weren't well versed in the names of nobles,

But they had at least heard of the Holy Knights.

They were famous among believers, they were the private army of the Millis Church.

"I would give up on holding those kids for ransom. It won't end well for you."

"I-If I was afraid of the Holy Knights, how could I go on kidnapping."

There was no way they weren't afraid.

They had heard rumours of how the Church treated heretics.

They would tie your hands and feet up and from your feet up, one by one, slowly smash every bone in your body.

Anyone else would see it as nothing but an act of sadism.

But they believed from the bottom of their hearts that what they were doing was good. And in response to your screams of pain all they would tell you is: "If you truly wish for salvation from the bottom of your heart, God will surely hear you. You may soon be by his side, rejoice," while giving you a smile that could relieve you from the bottom of your heart.

Of course, it was just a false rumour, but the men believed it.

"It's fine if you're not scared of the Holy Knights... But how about the Rudo Mercenaries? Their super beautiful financial advisor will chase you to the depths of hell, it's much scarier than dying."

"W-Why would the Rudo Mercenaries get involved?"

"Of course, because the Rudo Mercenaries top dog is those kids' father."

The men suddenly looked startled and looked at the kids.

"Onii-cha... Whoops, Rudo Mercenary Chief, Rudeus Greyrat.

Right Hand of the Dragon God, influential to many nations and a master mage.

He's normally quite gentle, and would just keep talking even if you poured liquor over his head at a party.

But he treasures his family quite highly, if he found out that his children were attacked, what would he do I wonder...?"

"Y-You're just making it up."

"Do you really think that? I'm starting to get tired of trying to convince you."

"Even if i'm wrong, if I take you out here, it makes no difference."

"Really now. Leo, do it."

At that command, the white beast moved like a storm.

First he went to the man in front of him bit his leg and shook his head.

The man's leg snapped with a clean sound and Leo let go.

The man spun through the air and slammed into a wall.

And by the time the other man had turned towards that sound, it was too late.

He didn't even have time to draw the sword on his back before Leo bit his hand, after a few snapping sounds he let go and bit at his face, then after being shaken around he fainted and was thrown at the wall.

"Hii..."

The woman didn't get away.

As she was trying to climb the wall to escape Leo bit at her behind and threw her at the wall like the other two and she passed out.

"..."

Ars watched the whole thing dumbfounded.

On top of that, Leo probably held back.

With that much power, he could have easily bit their heads off.

But he didn't.

He had gripped them between his teeth, broke their bones, and threw them into a wall knocking them out.

The opponents that Ars had feared.

"Is everyone alright? You're not hurt?"

Aisha completely ignored the passed out kidnappers.

She crouched in front of Ars and the others as if nothing had happened and checked them for wounds.

"N-No. We're fine."

"Really? Then let's head home."

Ars didn't know what was going on but he nodded, and Aisha flashed her tooth and smiled.

Part 7

Along the dark path.

The three were on Leo following Aisha and her lantern home.

The kidnappers had already been taken care of, after Aisha blew some kind of dog whistle, the Rudo Mercenaries came running and took them to the authorities.

Ars thought they would be scolded on the way home.

Why did you leave all by yourself?

Why did you get Lara and Sieg involved?

Aisha rarely got angry.

No matter how mischievous Ars was or how much trouble he caused for others, she never got angry.

She would always cover for him saying it couldn't be helped.

She would always kindly tell him not to do it again and to learn from his mistakes.

But this time, they were only a step away from disaster.

And they had ignored Aisha who was always looking after them to do so.

Aisha had come to search for them, but Mama or Papa probably got mad at her.

She was told to look after the kids until everyone came back, but they ended up disappearing.

And having someone you're watching over running away would also make you angry, no matter how gentle Aisha is,

even she would be annoyed.

Although Ars didn't think that far through, he could still guess that Aisha would be angry at them for what they did.

"Aisha-nee... Sorry."

And so, Ars apologised.

"Hmm? For what?"

"I left without telling you, and put everybody in danger..."

"Eeh? What are you talking about?"

But Aisha laughed and pat his head.

He couldn't feel the slightest bit of anger from her actions.

Ars wondered if she had forgiven them.

But why?

"We're here."

"...!"

Aisha said that and Ars realised they had arrived at the gate to the Latrea house.

In front of the manor, Ars swallowed in anticipation.

Aisha may have forgiven them.

But his mothers would definitely be angry.

They had taught him to protect his siblings.

And this time he had gone against that.

He should at least be prepared for Red Mama's spanking.

Even Papa might be angry.

"Thanks for your work."

Aisha said that to the gatekeepers and they followed her through the kitchen's back door.

They walked down a hallway and opened up a door to a room filled with their family.

In there was:

Their three mothers, two grandmothers, a blonde aunt, a stone faced great-grandmother and their Papa.

"We have returned."

Aisha bowed and the family looked at the three of them.

They were surely about to get scolded.

The first would probably be Red Mama.

Red Mama was always first.

That's what Ars thought.

"Oh, welcome home, you sure took your time."

But Red Mama simply gave them a light answer.

"Was the Adventurers Guild fun?"

Red Mama's tone was soft.

"But you shouldn't have come home so late. Even if you were with Aisha and Leo, it's dangerous at night."

"That's correct. Even though you were with them, you shouldn't be fluffing about outside at night. Why didn't you

return sooner?"

White Mama and Lilia's words were somewhat harsh but they weren't angry.
Norn-nee and Claire didn't say anything but their gazes said that they agreed.

"Don't worry too much, although they are a little late, we haven't even had dinner yet.
More importantly, did you see anything interesting?"

Papa, as always was sweet.

Zenith-Baachan was silent as always, but she didn't look like she was criticising them.
Zenith-Baachan was like that, but when she's mad you can just tell.

"Umm..."

Ars couldn't tell what was going on and was troubled on how to answer.
There was a noticeable silence.

"In the Adventurers Guild's guild room, there was a Dragon's head on the wall."

Lara suddenly said that.

Judging from her expression, it seemed like she knew the answer.
she probably heard it from Leo.

"Aah, Papa, did you know, in the Adventurers Guild, they had a Magic Sword!"

After that Sieg began talking about the Adventurers Guild with a happy look on his face.
The previous dilemma had probably already slipped from his mind.

"Let's finish the story later. We'll get Lucy and the others and have dinner."

The atmosphere was calm and they went and had dinner.

Part 8

After dinner, Ars left the large dining room.

He returned to his own room and as if it was natural, he turned around and faced Aisha.

"Why?"

The first thing Ars did was ask that.

Why was no one angry at them.

Why did everyone know they went to the Adventurers Guild.

All those included.

And Aisha just gave a smile.

"Wanna know?"

"Yeah."

Aisha changed from looking like she had just succeeded in a prank to a serious expression.

"I saw you when you three were trying to sneak out of the Cathedral's courtyard.
You looked like you had lost to your boredom and were about to pull some kind of prank, but when I heard you say
that you were going to the Adventurers Guild, I immediately followed."

Ars could understand that.

Aisha had already seen through everything.

And on top of that, she didn't meet up with them and let them do what they wanted.

Tailing them so that on the off chance that something happens, she can come out and save them.

"I didn't think you'd go all the way to the magic tower though."

She had always been protecting them.

Although she didn't intervene when they were lost and on the verge of tears...

"...Then when when you realised we were lost, why didn't you help us?"

"Hmm? Don't you already know that?"

Hearing her joke like tone, Ars clenched his teeth.

Of course Ars knew.

It was his fault they were in that situation.

He thought that because of his mothers' teachings, if something did happen, he'd be able to do something about it.

And even when he knew they were lost, he still didn't give up.

He mustered up his own wisdom and tried to figure something out.

It wasn't over.

And so Aisha continued to watch. It wasn't her turn to come out.

But in the end, when it came to a situation where they would be injured, she came out.

Ars made a mistake so she came to save them.

And because that woman didn't seem like a kidnapper, because she had kindly guided them around the guild, Aisha didn't act until the last moment.

He couldn't blame her.

Everything was his fault.

Aisha was still cleaning up after his mistakes.

"...Aisha-nee... I'm sorry."

"Anything else to say, do you know what you did wrong?"

"We snuck out without telling you..."

"No, that's not it."

Aisha's denial surprised Ars.

It was something unusual.

Aisha never really tried to teach Ars anything.

She always say "It can't be helped," and cleaned up the situation, but never said anything in regards to it.

But Aisha's face was the same as always with a smile full of composure.

"Ars-kun, you thought I was irritating and decided to go out by yourselves right?"

"I-I didn't think you were... irritating. Just a little... Aah, but I like you Aisha-nee."

"Really? Hehe, thanks. Hearing you say that, you're making me embarrassed."

Aisha put her hands on her cheeks and swayed side to side.

"In any case, you wanted to go to the Adventurers Guild without someone watching over you right?"

"Yeah."

"And you knew you shouldn't."

"Yes, but... Everyone would worry..."

"Of course, worrying everyone is bad."

"Yeah."

"But you never wanted to worry anyone on purpose right? You're not that mean of a kid."

Ars nodded.

He didn't think too much about it, but he never wanted to worry anyone.

"You thought that after you went to see the Adventurers Guild and the tower I'd just ask "Jeez, where have you been?" and you'd just look at Lara and Sieg and laugh "It's a secret." like nothing happened?"

It was exactly that.

He didn't have that clear an image, but a situation like that was Ars's ideal.

They would go out and enjoy themselves and return before they worried anyone.

They might have worried Aisha a little, but they would be right back and she'd say "So you were just over there," and give a sigh of relief.

"The fact that you couldn't do that is the problem."

Aisha said it straight out.

Ars had a goal.

To go to the Adventurers Guild without Aisha or Leo or anyone else.

She didn't care about the fact that they didn't want to go together, it was just part of the goal.

But if you set that as your goal, you have to complete it, is what she was saying.

"...Although you say that... Aisha-nee what would you have done?"

"Hmm. Even I'd have a hard time going to both the tower and the Adventurers Guild in that short amount of time.

They're just too far apart. So I'd probably just go with the Adventurers Guild and save the tower for another day.

Didn't you already know that you didn't have much time? So the second you heard our plans yesterday, you should have come up with a proper strategy."

"You're right..."

"I would have also brought a weapon, and a tool to contact someone. So just in case I ran into something I couldn't handle myself, I could call someone to come help."

Hearing it outlined so clearly, Ars realised what he did wrong.

Looking at it calmly, Ars really was careless.

It was too sudden and lacked thought.

Failing in that situation was a given.

At the same time he thought:

Aisha really is amazing.

"...I got it. Next time, I'll be more careful. So I don't worry anyone."

"Yes yes. As long as you keep that in mind. But while you have to be careful, you can't be scared of failure. Because you'll never be able to do anything that way. Fail to your heart's content."

"Eeh, but, if it ends up like today..."

"Don't worry! If you fail, I'll take care of it like today! Challenge yourself without fear."

Aisha whacked her large chest.

Ars didn't really understand, he remembered how today felt and smiled at Aisha.

"Alright. I understand Aisha-nee! Thanks!"

"You're very welcome! Aww, Ars-kun you're so cute!"

Aisha said that and hugged Ars.

And while he was having his head pat while being stuffed into Aisha's soft chest,
Ars was earnestly thinking over the day.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

[1. This](#)

Translator Comment

I want to apologise because I don't feel this chapter is up to the same standard as what I have the rest of them at. The author decided he wanted to write it third person but from someone's perspective (Just think about that for a second) and in Japanese this isn't too hard to do because you just remove any first person pronouns and it works. but in English what you get is a clunky mess of perspectives.

I tried my best to minimise any impact it had on the tone but I'm not perfect. This is one language difference that can't be overcome.

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Chapter 16: Roxy's Duty

Translator: Pielord Miniman

Editors/Proofreaders : King of the End, Manch

—○●○—

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 1](#)

That day I was reading on a chair out in the garden.

Eris and Sieg were nearby doing practice swings.

Although I think it would be fine to give it a rest while they're on vacation

Ars was with them just before but Rudy's aunt Therese had invited him off somewhere.

They're probably eating sweets inside her room by now.

Well that's fine, but he's always been somewhat...

Whenever he's with women with large chests, he always looks quite excited.

I feel his relations with women in the future will be harsh.

Lara has been wandering around the garden with Leo for a while now.

Probably plotting something again.

Her actions have been somewhat incomprehensible as of late...

That aside, Ars, Sieg, and Lara are all usually quiet around the house, so today should be quite peaceful.

Sylphy and Norn took Lucy and Clive on a trip to the Adventurers Guild.

They invited me along with them, but I turned them down.

I don't really want to have a child come up to me, tell me "I'm trying to make a party of adventurers around the same age," and invite me to join.

And in Millishion Magic races always stand out.

There was also Lilly and Chris to look after...

But they had already fallen asleep, so I was left without something to do for the first time in a while.

And being myself, I decided to read a book.

And lucky for me, there was quite an interesting book in the Latrea library.

The title was: 『Origins of Divine Attack Magic』

Its description of Resurrection Magic was quite interesting.

『During the Human-Demon Great War, the Demons utilised a certain magic to torment the Humans.

Resurrection Magic

A magic to revive and enslave the dead, now Skeletons, Wraiths, and Moving Armour type magic beasts are all

that's left of this Forbidden Art.

Divine Attack Magic was birthed to combat Resurrection Magic. And during the First Human-Demon Great War the two continued to counter each other and evolved together.

After that, Resurrection Magic was declared a Taboo and was lost, and Divine Attack Magic though it still exists today, is in decline.』

There weren't any detailed descriptions of any magic formations or chants, nor do I have any intention of attempting Resurrection Magic, but reading about it has tickled my curiosity.

Ancient magic battles.

How romantic...¹

“...Roxy-sama.”

“Yes?”

Someone called me from behind and I looked up from my book.

Standing there was a maid of the Latrea house.

I have a bad feeling about this.

“The madam... Claire-sama has called for you.”

Claire Latrea.

She is more or less my grandmother-in-law.

Although we should be around the same age...

For now, I won't show any displeasure, but if it has something to do with the Demon Expulsion faction, I'm sure that will change.

I wonder what she wants to say.

To be honest I want to run...

I snuck a glance at Eris.

“Oi, tuck your arms in more! Raise your chin!”

She's teaching swordplay with the same enthusiasm as always.

If it has something to do with my race, that's fine, but if it's something else...

Like if it's about the children's education.

But if I run she might end up calling on Eris.

Eris can't handle complex or subtle conversations.

If they say something she doesn't like, she'll end up hitting someone.

That's just what she's like.

She would be able to rebuke Claire, but then a fight would be unavoidable.

“I understand.”

This is just another duty as Rudeus's wife.

Part 2

Although I had gotten myself hyped up over it...

“...”

Currently Claire is quietly drinking her tea.
And I, unable to say anything, am simply sitting in front of her.
For some reason Lillia and Zenith are here too, Lillia being in the same shoes as me.
Zenith is the same as always.

Honestly, it's suffocating.
There are also some sweets next to the tea but I can't reach for them.
They're some of my favourites, but I feel like if I try to grab one, I'll get told off.
"You'll ruin your dinner," or something like that... I'm often having to tell Lara that.

It can't be a coincidence that both Lillia and I are here.
Although our husbands are different, we both have the same position that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call 'mistress'.
And that's something that the Millis religion doesn't accept.

That said, I am prepared.
I have been somewhat spoilt as of late, but I have always been prepared for insensitive statements.

It seems Lillia feels the same way I do.
Or maybe she was already prepared for it far before I was.
In any case, I can consider it a silver lining that Eris wasn't called here.

"It seems Rudeus-san is out."

Claire broke the silence.
She was the first one to talk since I entered.

"He went to deliver a gift to Cliff-san."
"Work it is. Even though he's on vacation with his family... He's exactly like Carlyle in that aspect."

Rudeus woke up early this morning and went with Elinalise to deliver 『The Doll』 to Cliff.
But would it be ok to call that work...?

The Doll.
It was an Automaton designed to take care of Cliff.
I had already received an explanation regarding Anne, and I didn't have any real opinion on her...
But even I feel this one is somewhat off putting.

After all, it looks exactly like Elinalise, even its behaviour and tone are identical, only the ears are short.

The appearance was apparently her idea.
Recently Cliff's position has gotten quite high, he's been quite popular with women and has even gotten a number of marriage proposals.
So she intends to use it as a form of pesticide.

They were planning to introduce it at Cliff's wife, hiding the fact that she was an Elf.
Elinalise had spent many months teaching it how to act like her.

That said, Elinalise probably had another use in mind for it.
She had complained that "It doesn't have what it needs."

Of course it's not exactly like her to the last detail, but it really does look just like her, it's unnerving.
Rudy had once made a doll of me, but I really couldn't handle it if it moved.
If he had asked me for permission, I would have to turn him down.

Even Rudy wouldn't make one without permission.

And in my case, the real thing is close by, so there's no need for a substitute.

Although not to the extent of Sylphy, I won't complain about anything Rudy earnestly requests of me.

I would like to be spared from anything overly perverted though.

In any case, although I haven't known Cliff for all that long, would a devout Millis believer be happy to get something like that?

"It's a surprise present," is what Rudy had said, but I feel like he might get angry instead.

But that's not a problem I need to worry about.

"I don't think it's something you could call work. He and Cliff are especially close."

"I see. If it was I, as long as it's not something outsiders shouldn't see, I wouldn't see any reason to go out of my way to deliver it myself, I'll attribute it to a difference in common sense."

No, it really is something outsiders shouldn't see.

If it didn't come together with an excuse, there's no way Cliff would take it.

"By the way, Lillia-san, where might Aisha-san be today?"

"Aisha has gone to pay a visit to the Mercenaries, she left this morning. It seems she won't be back until this afternoon."

Aisha is with the Mercenaries.

It's just that after hearing "Ars will be in the house all day today," She abruptly decided to leave.

She probably didn't want to be in the house.

Thinking about it, after Lucy and the others said they wanted to go out, Norn and Sylphy immediately agreed and they left.

Well Norn coming along was in part due to Lucy begging to go out with her.

"It seems those children aren't so fond of this house."

Claire breathed out her nose and took a sip of tea.

Maybe she didn't like the taste, but she knit her eyebrows.

And then with a somewhat troubled look on her face, she looked Lillia in the eyes.

"Lillia-san, when you came here last, I was quite harsh towards you."

"...No, I do not think such at all."

"I would like to apologise for it.

In that time, a man whose birth was unknown named himself Zenith's husband and requested assistance from my house.

After that, when I thought they had found Zenith, another woman naming herself his wife with her daughter appeared before me, I was not feeling of good temper."

"I can understand your mindset. I do not mind."

"And so, I somewhat held it against Aisha."

What's this prickly mood.

It's making my stomach hurt.

"But my worry was reversed. You have served the Greyrat house well.

The reason Zenith has recovered to such an extent is due to your strong encouragement.

I thank you for supporting Zenith from the shadows."

"...I am unworthy of your words. I am in no way strong."

"You are the only one who thinks that. If you had heard what Zenith had to say yesterday you would understand. Everyone in the Greyrat house is grateful towards you."

“...”

It's true.

Rudy may not be conscious of it, but he treats Lillia the same as Zenith.

Not as below her, but as an equal.

That said, Zenith is in a state which she can't voice her gratitude.

If Lillia made the choice, she could live not as a maid, but properly as his mother.

But if that were the case, our home might not be as peaceful as it currently is, and Zenith's treatment may not have been how it is.

It is because of Lillia, without desire, working from the shadows, that the Greyrat house is what it is today.

“You too Roxy-san.”

“Eh?”

Being suddenly addressed, I raised my head in surprise.

Claire wasn't looking at me, but at her own hands and Zenith.

And then she turned to look out the window.

“These last few days, I've been able to watch the children.

Every one of them are so lively.

Although Lara is somewhat overly mischievous, she's a good girl.”

“...Um, by any chance did she do something?”

“Yesterday morning, she gave me a frog as a present.”

I widened my eyes in surprise.

Just what is that girl doing?

“That's... Um, I'm terribly sorry. Please let me...”

“No apology is necessary. When lunch time came around I had it grilled and gave it back to her.”

I widened my eyes in surprise.

Now that I think about it, yesterday afternoon I remember seeing her eating something grilled.

But when I asked her what it was she told me it was a “Secret”...

“Of course, I had one of our chefs properly prepare it. I don't partake very often, but frog is quite a popular food around here.”

Because it rains quite often in the Millis continent, frog and lizard dishes are numerous.

During my time as an adventurer, I was quite grateful for that fact

Although there was the time before I knew detoxification magic that I almost died after eating a poisonous one...

But if they had a proper chef look at it, I'm sure they wouldn't feed Lara poison.

But that's quite surprising.

From what Rudy had told me, she was quite rigid, and wouldn't be the kind of person to do something like that.

“This morning she had told me “That snack yesterday was delicious, I will certainly repay this.”

I don't have a clue what her intentions are in repaying me...”

Is she criticising her?

Her tone is sharp as always, and there isn't a hint of a smile on her face.

She's criticising her isn't she.

“Haa.”

Claire let out a sigh.

It seems she's getting to the main topic.

"I don't know what has you so stiff, but Rudeus-san has told me that I am not to meddle in your family.
I do have some things I would like to say, but I intend to keep my promise."

When she says it like she's scolding me, I'm really not convinced.

"The reason why I have called the two of you here today is because, compared to the others, you two are the most mature.

Slyphiette-san is still young, and Eris-san is still immature.

I don't know how Zenith was before, but now, she isn't someone that needs to be cared for by others.

What I wish is for the two of you to take a step back and have a good look.

And so... *Cough* *Cough*..."

Claire had a coughing fit and the nearby maids ran over.

I stood up and prepared to cast detoxification magic.

But Claire shooed the maids away saying it was nothing and resumed drinking her tea.

"I'm fine, I just choked... Hmm?"

Claire was looking at Zenith.

She had just been looking at air seemingly oblivious to the conversation around her.

But she had stood without Lillia's incitement and was facing Claire with her vacant eyes.

"Should you not rest?"

Lillia had said it, but it almost sounded as if it had come from Zenith.

"Really, I simply choked a little and you're causing such a fuss.

Everyone is surprised when they see me with a cane...

My back may be gone, but my mind is as sharp as ever.

You too Zenith, stop making that face and sit down."

Hearing her mention Zenith's face, I took another look at her.

It was the same blank expression.

I looked at Claire quizzically, but she also looked surprised.

For now, I'll return to my own seat.

Zenith, by Lillia's hand, was also back in her seat.

"..."

Silence once again flowed.

Claire's surprised expression gradually returned to normal.

But it seemed like she still wasn't quite calm on the inside yet.

"...When she first stepped into the aristocracy."

Claire once again started talking.

"When Zenith first attended a noble party, on the way out I lost my footing on a staircase and fell."

Her tone had gotten emotional.

Before I knew it, Claire's gaze had fell.
Something like sobbing had gotten mixed into Claire's voice.

"It was no large injury. It was quickly mended with healing magic...
But for some reason, I can clearly remember Zenith's face at the time."

Something came dripping out of Claire's sunken face.
She picked up the handkerchief by her side and wiped around her eyes.

"Zenith's reputation was excellent, I was so proud. I, never once thought, I raised her wrong..."

Claire's shoulders were shaking.
And I, not knowing what to say, simply stared at her.

"..."

I suddenly thought.

My thoughts on the children's futures.
I married Rudy, I gave birth to Lara and Lily.
I would leave the children to the family and teach at the Magic University.
Sylphy, Lillia and the like would look after the children at home, and I would look after them when they enrolled in the school.
It was a fulfilling life.

But I hadn't given any thought to the idea on how to raise them.
Lara was the daughter I gave birth to, but compared to Lucy she was quite mischievous, and it had me worried.
Was it because I was of a Magic race, was it because she was half human, I worried about all kinds of things.
But before I knew it I had spent years worrying and she had already grown up.
She wasn't particularly cut off from the other children, and was quite close with Ars and Sieg.
She'll calm down when she gets older.(i)
That's what I thought. I was the same.

But I hadn't really thought of anything past that.
Lara has the role of 'Saviour' placed upon her, but I don't entirely understand what that's supposed to mean.
I knew she would participate in the fight against Hitogami, but what about after that?
Right, after the fight, life still continues.
Honestly, I thought worrying over it was pointless...

"I apologise for my loss of composure."
"Don't mind it."
"One shouldn't be crying at my age."

Claire, with her eyes still red, returned her handkerchief to the table.
She also cried yesterday, at the Miko's reenactment of Zenith's story.

"Ahem.
In the Holy Millis Nation, there is a saying that a broken house raises broken children.
I am also in agreement with that opinion."

Claire said that and took a strong look at us.

"The children of the Greyrat house are all healthy and in no way warped.
I would also never call Zenith warped.

But, from here on out, you should be careful.
On the chance that any abnormalities appear, you would be the first to notice."

Abnormality.
Like when Zenith decided to go out on her own.

It's certainly possible.
Especially Lara. I can never tell just what she's thinking.

No, it might not be Lara.
Maybe because she had been raised so meticulously, Lucy would be at the most risk.
At school she's a dedicated scholar...
Would I find some abnormality?
Uh... Just thinking about it makes my head hurt.

"I called you here today to tell you just that."

Claire leaned deeply back into her chair.
Lillia and I exchanged glances.
In response to my bewilderment, Lillia looked at Claire with determination.

"I understand. You may leave it to me."

She looks like a soldier just entrusted with an important mission.
She can probably say that because she has confidence in the way she raised Norn and Aisha.
Oh, Rudy too.

"I will also do what I can."

I also said that.
It's not because I have confidence.
As a teacher I've seen all kinds of people,
But I still don't think I'm qualified for it.
But through Eris and Sylphy's guidance, I hope I can provide a new path for anyone who strays.
If it's that much, I can manage.
I have to.

But that's not all there is to it.
Although Claire has her own viewpoint, I have to look at it objectively.
She's from the Demon Expulsion Faction, so her opinions ought to reflect that.
I want to be able to respond to her request, even though she thinks little of me as the Magic Race I am.

"Hmm?"

The door to the room opened.

A white dog walked into the room.
And of course, on top of it was Lara.
Lara was, for some reason, covered in mud.
Both her shoes and clothes.
Even though I've told her so many times to not walk into the house with dirty shoes.

"Lara, don't ride Leo inside."

Lara looked annoyed about it, but she still got off him.
I don't tell her very often around the house, but I feel like it's been working as of late.
Even at school, whenever I take my eyes off her, she's always on him.
I feel like sighing.

Lara just slowly walked up to Claire.

"Hi-Baachan, I found something cool."

"What is it?"

"This."

Lara reached into her pocket and pulled out some round gold object.
I couldn't see it well from where I was sitting, but it looked like a necklace of some kind.

Claire was amazed when she saw it.

"Where did you find this?"

"The garden; lost. Hi-Baachan you've been looking for it right?"

"Yes, for quite a while now... But, how?"

"Ba-chan said: "Even though you were always wearing it; you probably ruined your back bent over searching for it""

Lara looked at Zenith and said that.

That wasn't something the Miko had said the other day.

Lara probably heard it herself maybe yesterday or this morning.

"And you went to find it for me?"

"As thanks for the snack yesterday."

"..."

"It was delicious, but those are better as snacks."

Lara shifted her attention to the table.

She's looking at the cakes that came out with the tea.

"You can eat them if you want."

"Rub a dub dub, thanks for the grub."¹

Lara grabbed one and put it straight into her mouth.

With both explosiveness and agility, in an instant she had cleared the table.

I at least wanted to tell her to wash her hands first.

"Ah."

She ate mine too.

"..."

Well I don't really mind.

If I ask Rudy I can have sweets whenever I want...

I won't get mad at a child for stealing my food.

But my...

"Ahhh~"

She looked quite satisfied as she swallowed the last bite.

Leo was astonished.

As if he was wondering where his portion was.

We're in the same boat.

"Yup, it's better than frog."

"Well then I guess I'll have to have some ready for tomorrow as well."

"Yay!"

Lara got back on Leo and headed back outside.

She had already forgot my warning not to ride Leo inside.

"Ah, um, I'm sorry she doesn't have any manners."

I apologised but Claire was focused on what Lara had brought to her.

When I got a closer look, I could see it was a gold locket.

It had a young man's picture inside.

"Carlyle gave this to me just before we were married."

"..."

"It was something far too expensive for his station at the time but he had told me: "After we are married, I will be a member of the Latrea house, and I will no longer be able to buy you something with money that is wholly my own.""

She sounds touched remembering it.

"I had lost it about a year ago, but had been bent over looking for it, my back became as such and I was forced to give up..."

The maids were also surprised by it.

Claire probably didn't tell the servants she had lost it.

"Roxy-san."

"Yes."

"There is no need to be caught up in formalities when expressing gratitude."

"...Haa."

"Lara's manners are plenty sufficient. It seems I was mistaken."

No, I don't really think Lara is that admirable of a girl.

But if she can say that, I may have been mistaken about the woman called Claire Latrea.

Rudy had been quite wary, and Aisha outright hates her.

I had been quite on guard, I wonder why.

Or perhaps she has changed since Rudy last met her.

He has an effect on all kinds of people...

In any case, I think I can get along with this person.

We haven't known each other for long, but after this visit, we may never meet again.

"Make sure that girl doesn't fall down the wrong path."

"Of course."

I nodded in response.

Translator Notes and References

1. "Romantic" Written in katakana (The Engrish Japanese alphabet) has a different meaning to the traditional love sense and refers to the older artistic, epic, adventurous meaning.
2. Originally: "Itadakimasu". If I made you laugh I have succeeded.

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Chapter 17: Along The Holy Sword Highway

Translator: Pielord Miniman

Editor & Proofreader : King of the End

—○●○—

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Part 1

Time flew by and our 10 day stay passed in the blink of an eye.

The first day was a visit to the cathedral.

We took Zenith to the Miko and she used her power to hear what she had to say.

Claire was with us too, and half way she broke down into tears.

I almost did as well, but seeing that Zenith was happy as always, I held it in.

While we were doing that the children seemed quite bored waiting outside, but we still had to meet with the Pope together with the Miko so we ended up taking quite a while.

The Miko kept bragging about her daily training routine and how slim she'd gotten and just wouldn't stop...

The kids must really have been bored out there.

Apparently Aisha took Ars, Lara, and Sieg to see the Adventurers Guild HQ.

Going by the fact that they go back so late and Ars's face when he got back, it looked like some problem had occurred...

But Aisha had probably already dealt with it.

But it didn't seem that Lucy was mad at being left behind.

She and Clive were probably satisfied looking around the Cathedral together.

She might have liked the gardens or maybe Clive's tour was quite entertaining.

And seeing that Lucy wouldn't tell me the details it was probably the latter.

If I pressed it I might have gotten it out of her, but I held back.

In any case, I'd like for Clive-kun to continue to be sincere.

The second, third, and fourth days were spent giving various greetings.

Letting people know that the Dragon God's subordinate was in Millishion.

The Holy Knight Captain.

Various members of the Latrea family. And of course among them was my aunt Therese. She's unfortunately still unmarried.

After that was the formal audience with the Pope...

I met with the Millis Royal Family.

The 5th Royal Prince. And although he was a price he was over forty.

It was a real pain, but I eventually managed to secure an audience with the King in several days time.

For a greeting as the representative of the Dragon God.

Orsted had said, "It's fine if you put off making relations with the Millis Royal Family," but I asked him before and a simple greeting was fine.

I don't know why he said that after hearing that we were going there for a holiday, but the original purpose was show the kids different parts of society.

I myself didn't see any problem.

On the fifth day we delivered the doll to Cliff.

When we got there he had some good news for us.

In the last five years he seemed to be evaluated quite highly and they were considering his promotion to Bishop. Normally that would be impossible as young as he is, but I'm sure there's some kind of ulterior motive.

The parish Cliff is in charge of is in a particularly special location.

The southernmost point of the Great Forest.

When I went through it while traveling, it wasn't a particularly important place.

But it seems that in the last 10 years the scope of the place has increases along with the number of people.

The city isn't affiliated with any particular country or race, but when places get larger like that, people are bound to be interested.

And so, various representatives of different races have gathered there to decide all kinds of things.

The Millis Church's representative is an Archbishop known as the Cardinals' Dagger and part of the Demon Expulsion Faction.

He follows the Human Supremacy Doctrine, so not only is he against the Magic Races, but the Beast Races too.

He's a disdainful man, but he's good at his job.

I'm sure he's working to assure all kinds of things are in his interests.

But considering his personality, putting him there could cause problems with their relationship with the Great Forest.

But there are some especially extreme groups among the Demon Expulsion faction that welcome such a turn of events.

And so that's why Cliff was chosen.

Because of his relationship with the Rudo Mercenaries who employ a number of beast races and one of the Beast Race Princesses.

He was well connected, possessed no prejudice and he was of the pope faction.

So they raised his rank and gave him the job of overseer.

Cliff seemed disappointed that he wasn't chosen purely for his ability.

But regardless, after he finishes his work in the city, he'll be a Bishop in both name and rank.

Once he becomes a bishop, his influence will increase, and if he can gain favour with the Elves of the Great Forest, the church may stand for him taking one as a wife.

If that happens he'll be able to invite Elinalise and Clive to Millis.

And after hearing that much I was like "Then here's your promotion gift!"

And took out the doll, but he got super mad.

Apparently if they knew he was with a woman at this time, it would be a big fuss.

That said, he didn't completely outlaw the doll, so I think he might have been happy with the idea.

He seemed quite curious as to the details of its Magic Formation.

Well if it comes down to it we can always put some sunglasses on it and dress it as a man, like Sylphy suggested. It has the strength to act as a bodyguard so I'm sure it would be helpful for Cliff in his line of work. There's no guarantee that that Archbishop won't try to assassinate him.

Incidentally, when I returned that day, Claire was in quite a good mood.

Apparently Lara found her locket that she had lost a year ago.

It's a good story.

A parent loves to boast about their kids.

...Although Leo was probably the one doing the searching.

And Roxy's child raising motivation seemed to have increased.

"All the children will be at school soon, so I'm going to have to properly watch over them," she said.

Roxy's cute but she's the type to worry too much when she's enthusiastic about something so I'm a little worried.

Also, apparently Sylphy and Norn took Lucy and Clive to the Adventurers Guild.

Lucy talked about how wonderful their lunch was with a massive smile plastered over her face.

It seemed like she wasn't that interested in the guild itself.

On the sixth and seventh days we walked around with no particular goal.

We went shopping and took the kids sightseeing.

We took a carriage out of the city to look around, we stopped at a nearby farm, we let the kids play in the river we came across.

We basically just did whatever we felt like.

The ninth day was the audience with the King.

The Millis King was a mild old man.

In Millis the Church holds most of the power so the Royal family is comparatively weak.

And because of my connections with the church, the meeting was simply a formality.

I would have liked to show the castle to the children, but I held myself back on that one.

...Well it couldn't be helped.

Because we could say that we enjoyed Millishion to the limit.

Part 2

It's now the tenth day.

Time for us to leave Millishion.

We'll head north through the Blue Dragon Mountain Range towards the hot springs.

"There aren't any monsters until we reach the entrance to the Great Forest, but I hear there are a lot of ruffians near the town stops.

Just you alone would be one thing, but to bring children along too, you'll should be a bit more careful..."

Right before we left, Claire gave us a good mouthful.

When I was here last, she was reprimanding me for all kinds of things, but when we first arrived she didn't say much, now, by the tenth day, she seems to have no problem scolding us.

Although she's not unpleasant about it.

She probably finally managed to get a feel of the distance between us.

But right before we left, she turned to face Norn.

"Norn-san, this time around we didn't talk all that much, but would it be alright if I said just one thing to you?"

“...Yes.”

Norn had “Here it comes,” written all over her face.
She’s been trying her best to avoid Claire these past 10 days.
Even in spite of Ruijerd telling her to treasure her relatives...
But Norn couldn’t be blamed.
If they were to talk, Claire might end up bad mouthing Ruijerd.
And if that happened, I’m sure Norn would fight back in turn.
Claire’s quite stubborn, so I’m sure she wouldn’t take back anything she said and it’s quite possible it could turn into a massive ordeal.

“You are no longer a Latrea or a Greyrat.”

“Yes.”

In that instant, Norn’s expression was extremely aggressive.
She probably expected something unfavourable about being a Demon’s wife.
That’s just how sharp Claire’s words were.
Even I had a premonition that something bad was going to happen.

“You are now the wife and mother of the Sperdia Family. Be aware of that and work yourself to the bone for your husband.”

“Eh?”

But what Claire followed up with was something quite sensible.
It did sound somewhat like an order though...

“I am not knowledgeable of Demon customs but is it a wife’s duty to protect their children and house, I’m sure that hasn’t changed.”

“...”

“Do you understand?”

“Ah... Yes!”

Norn looked quite shocked but she eventually meekly nodded.

Claire then nodded in satisfaction.
As if a weight was lifted from her shoulders.

I feel like Claire has changed in these last 10 days.
Maybe because of that, Roxy and Lillia could spend their last few days here relaxing.
Something probably happened in the time I was away.
Especially Claire and Roxy. They seem much closer compared to when they just met.

She’s probably happy Claire wasn’t discriminating against her.
Roxy’s had more than enough of that in her time after all.

And thanks to that, Norn probably managed to get over a little of her ill feelings.
...Aisha is the same as ever though.

Part 3

After about half a day’s travel from Millishion, we arrived at the entrance to the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.
We stopped the carriage and got the children off.

And then we turned around.

“...”

A spectacle opened up before us.

You could see the City of Millision in the distance.

The river flowing through the city, green as far as the eye can see.

We spent 10 days there.

The Brilliant white Royal Palace, the glittering gold Cathedral, and the Sparkling silver Adventurers Guild.

It's the same view I saw together with Eris and Ruijerd 20 years ago.

Although the small building and the people living there might be different, seeing it like this makes it seem like nothing's changed.

“What do you think?”

This kind of massive scenery is something you can see quite often in this world, but I would bet there's no other place that you could walk around in and then look at it from a distance like this.

It gives a kind of indescribable feeling.

I stopped thinking to myself and turned around to check the children's reactions.

“Wow~!”

They were quite varied.

Lucy had a smile of honest admiration.

She's been acting more and more like the eldest sister lately, but she's still quite childish in this aspect.

...Oh, Clive next to her seems to be debating to himself whether or not to grab her hand.

But he didn't get far before Lucy turned and smiled at him. “It's amazing!” she said, before Clive blushed and threw out “It's not all that great.”

He's so cute...

Just watching them makes me feel more relaxed.

I remember when I was doing things like that... Wait, did I? I have a feeling I didn't.

Oh, and Cliff is with us this time around.

He's going to be with us until we get to the post town where he's going to be inspecting his new church.

Although that's just the official excuse.

He had managed to convince the Pope to let him spend some time with Elinalise.

“...I wanna live here some day. It's full of sweets.”

Lara stared sleepily for a couple seconds and said that.

I had heard from Roxy in the carriage just before, but apparently Claire was pampering Lara quite a bit.

Claire would prepare sweets for her every day, and she spent each one with a smile of bliss on her face.

She does seem somewhat more plump compared to when we got here.

It seems she was silently living in sweets paradise.

“Hey, Papa and Red Mama came here a while back right?”

“Yeah, but I was a little older than you are now.”

“Hmm...”

Ars nodded and clenched his fist.

He's probably thinking of becoming an adventurer in the future.

"Hey, Hey, Mama! That's the Nicholas River! And over there is the forest where the goblins live!"

"That's right. Do you know what that one is?"

"That one... It's the Gate of Triumph! The Gate of Triumph is where Saint Millis returned after the war!

That's why it's bigger than the rest!"

"That's right. You sure do know a lot."

Sieg was pointing at everything he could see, assaulting Roxy with one question after another.

Alek has been telling him stories of all kinds of adventurers so he's oddly well informed.

He seems even more likely than Ars to get into adventuring.

"Papa, pick me up."

Chris walked up to me and held her hands up.

"...Do you not understand them?"

"Yea..."

After I picked her up, as if she had no interest in the scenery, she buried her face in my shoulder.

Chris is cute as always.

"..."

Lily also got Sylphy to pick her up, and was playing with a Magic Tool we bought in the streets the other day.

She doesn't seem all that interested either.

It's probably a bit too early for these two.

I guess that's pretty normal.

Or maybe Lucy and the others who can be honestly impressed with the scenery just mature faster.

"...It sure brings me back."

Eris was next to me before I even realised.

"Back then, I never would have thought we'd end up like this."

Eris looked over Millishion as if she were embracing it.

Her red hair was fluttering in the wind.

She's still young, but she'd graduated from childhood into a beautiful woman.

"What did you think would happen?"

"...I thought, we'd end up with something more simple."

Our lives really aren't that simple.

Eris doesn't think too hard about many things, but it's not like she doesn't put thought into anything.

Although she's calmed down after giving birth to two children, time changes people.

"I love you Rudeus."

Eris suddenly looked me in the eyes and said that.

She's making my heart race.

What do I do. Right now, My face is probably bright red.¹

"I love you too Eris."

I managed to calm myself down and say that, and Eris leaned on me slightly.

This would be my chance to get my hands on Eris, but unfortunately, they're holding something else important. Instead I thought to just tickle Chris and she quickly began to giggle.

"Papa, no tickling."

"Whoops, sorry."

"You won't tickle?"

"I won't, I promise."

Eris began to giggle at our exchange and kissed me on the cheek.

She then kissed Chris on the forehead and turned to the others.

"I guess it's about time we got moving."

After she said that, we headed back for the carriage.

Part 4

In the valley that divides the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.

On the proverbial 'handle' of the Holy Sword Highway.

The cliffs rise up straight from the ground, with only the occasional rock jutting out, producing a gloomy valley as far as the eye can see.

The children were quite excited when they first saw it.

Even Lara let one of her rare "Wow,"s slip.

The adventure has begun.

From here on out, we have no idea what we might come across.

Will we see monsters? I had heard that there was a Blue Dragon somewhere near here, but will we get a chance to see it...?

Our hopes were destroyed after a few days.

The scenery never changed.

Because it's not the right season, there were no dragons.

And of course, we didn't see any monsters.

The valley just continued on endlessly.

The children were over it within three days.

Lara didn't even try to hide it and would just shout "I'm bored!" repeatedly. Occasionally she would say "I'm walking Leo," leave the Carriage, and go off somewhere on top of him.

If she finds a gap she might even be able to climb the cliff.

Ars, Sieg and Clive didn't say anything, but you could see the delight on their faces whenever the carriage stopped and they could practice their combat with Eris, or have mock battles with each other, or practice magic with Roxy. We wasted our days away in the rocking carriage.

Chris was crying "We're trapped!" and Lily had already disassembled the magic toy she had gotten only a few days prior.

The only quiet one was Lucy, who was still reading the book she had gotten from the Latrea house.

I hope she doesn't get motion sick reading on a carriage.

The carriage was in constant pandemonium.

We all worked together to try to pacify the kids...

But this is the first time they've been out after all, so maybe we should have stopped by some more interesting places.

Although there is the matter of safety.

That said.

It's precisely because they were so over it, that when we got to the post town, they were overwhelmed with excitement.

"We're heeeeeere!"

The second they saw the town at the end of the valley, Ars, Sieg, and Lara all jumped straight out of the carriage.

"Don't go running off!"

Eris and Sylphy chased after them.

Ars and Sieg got caught by the scruff of the neck, but Leo managed to slip away and climb onto a rock some way up the cliff.

That said, there's no reason to panic.

The Holy Sword Highway is a relatively safe place.

"Lara! We're all sticking together until we get to the inn!"

Eris's shout was oddly restless.

She was also quite bothered being cooped up in the carriage.

She's much more mature and calm than she used to be, but you can't change a person's true nature.

Eris has never been someone able to sit around for a long period of time.

Ars and Sieg reluctantly returned to the carriage.

But Lara didn't.

She stared at the forest that opened up endlessly before her.

"Lara, come back."

Lara turned around to look at Sylphy but Leo didn't move.

She looked at both Sylphy and Leo, got off his back, and tapped him a couple times.

But seeing that he still didn't move, she looked somewhat troubled.

Sylphy, no longer able to wait, began to walk up to them.

But the second she reached out to Leo, Lara stepped in between them.

"Wait."

"You can look at it all you want tomorrow, so let's go."

"This is Leo's first time seeing his home like this, wait a little."

"I see..."

Sylphy looked like she didn't know what to do and looked towards me.

I'd like to let him look, a little more, but right now we're moving together.

I'd like to get going quickly to keep the children from exploding.

What to do... Even if Leo is with her, there's no way I can let them catch up by themselves.

Sylphy's probably thinking the same.

I got off the carriage and walked up to them.

"I'll bring them back, so you go on ahead."

"...Ok. Come find us before it gets dark."

Sylphy took me on my word, nodded, and headed back towards the carriage.

I sat down on the rock next to Leo.

And Lara sat down next to me.

The three of us in a line, overlooking the Great Forest.

Although it's a relatively flat and straight road, because it passes through a mountain, we have a good view from above.

A brown line cuts through green as far as the eye can see.

It's kind of magnificent.

Thinking back on it, last time I was here, I never even turned around to take a look...

"Lara?"

"Yeah?"

"Does Leo miss it?"

"...It doesn't, seem like it."

Doesn't seem like it, huh.

"Huh..."

"..."

Then I wonder what he's feeling.

Since I'm not Bowlingual I can't tell, but the one that is, doesn't speak all that much.²

I don't want to ask her too much so I don't make her feel like an interpretation machine.³

Whatever, I'll change the topic.

"Lara?"

"Yeah?"

"I was going to tell you when you turned 10, but when you get older, you're supposed to go to the Dorudia village for some kind of ritual at their Holy Tree."

"I know, I heard."

"From who?"

"Leo."

From the Holy Beast himself huh.

"You know Pursena right?"

"Aisha-nee's dog."

That's a harsh rating.

Although she's not wrong.

"You'll go together with her."

Lara looked somewhat puzzled at that.

"...Papa won't come too?"

"I'd like to, but it's one of the Beast Race's special rituals so Humans might not be allowed."

Or is she thinking something else?

Does she not want her Papa to come because it's embarrassing?

Although I think she's still a bit young for her rebellious phase...

And then Leo looked at me.

"Woof."

"...Leo says it's not a problem."

She's probably talking about me coming along.

Since she took the trouble to translate for me... I guess that means she's not against the idea.

That said, when she gets older, she'll probably find every reason she can to dislike me.

Don't wash my clothes with your underwear! Or something like that.

Chris is still saying things like "I'll marry Papa when I grow up," but i'm sure that'll change when she gets a little older.

"Papa."

"Hmm?"

"It's alright, you can look forward to it."

"...Thanks, I guess I will."

I don't know what I should be looking forward to, but for now I'll agree.

Lara returned my nod looking satisfied and stood up.

Is it time to go now?

But right as I was about to get up,

"Whou...!"

Something suddenly landed on my shoulders.

But when I saw the tiny shoes in my field of vision, I knew that Lara had climbed onto me.

"Carry me."

"...Am I Leo's replacement now?"

"I want to be pampered by Papa."

So it's like that.

Well then, I guess I shall oblige.

Rudeus-san spoils his daughters.

"ARH-WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO"

As I stood up, Leo howled.

The sound rang far through the Great Forest.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1. Ok, these lines sound way out of place in english.

But it's actually a joke on Rudeus's part.

"Doki Doki Shichau.

Doushimashou. Tabun, ima, atashi no kao, makka wa."

The is a super cliche line that a shoujo heroine would think to themselves after being confessed to.

The tone is super effeminate and he even uses 'Atashi' the most effeminate of pronouns.

[2. This joke was legit there in the Japanese.](#)

ハウリンガル - Bowlingual (Bow wow the dog noise combined with Bilingual)

It refers to this gimmick product that claims to translate barks into Japanese and Rudy refers to Lara as one.

It literally says: "Since I don't have a Bowlingual I can tell, but ours doesn't really speak all that much."

[3. Hey! What's wrong with that. I'm offended \[Sarcasm\]](#)

While I'm here I'd like you guys to give the Editor, King of the End, a thank. He's been with me since nearly when I took over and he's saved me hours of having to read over my work multiple times. He's been doing (almost) thankless work for a while now and he's still always there ready and happy to help. So let him know he's appreciated.

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Chapter 18: Hot Springs

Translator: Pielord Miniman

Editors/Proofreaders : King of the End

—○●○—

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Part 1

When you think of mountains, hot springs come to mind.

After that, we arrived in the post town, and after pushing our way through the swarms of Beast Races' gathering to meet Leo, we arrived at our inn.

After taking a quick stroll through the town, we met up with our guide, Talhand.
And after the children fell asleep, we had an adult-only meeting in the tavern.

After our stay at the inn, we set out first thing in the morning.
Following Talhand's directions, we arrived at the hot springs.

We had heard that Monsters appear around the hot springs, but it was much closer than I thought.
You can see from the rockface the other day meets the milky white of the hot springs.
The entire area was surrounded by a large stone wall to keep the Monsters out.
And if you look down in the direction we climbed up, you can see the post town in the distance.
In other words, it's an open air bath with a superb view.

And of course, it's a mixed bath.
But there really aren't many people here.
There aren't even any Humans.
If you look around, it's almost entirely Dwarves and Hobbits, with the occasional Beast Race.
Hot springs probably aren't all that popular with Humans or Elves.
In Human culture, baths like this are usually the things of Nobility.

Well then, there aren't many people.
And there are no Humans.
That said, there are men.
There are men and women.
Showing my beloved wives' and daughters' naked bodies to unknown men is a good thing.
Wait, no it's not.

Especially this time, because it's not just *my* wives.

Elinalise is here too.
Even if she used to be your friendly neighbourhood adventuring stripper, I will find pleasure in seeing another man's sexy Elf wife naked.
Wait, that's not right.

And so, with that in mind, I have prepared a special kind of bathrobe.
It's a Kantoui Made of a dark fabric.¹
It has no particular resistances, but it's made to feel natural like a swimsuit when wearing it.
The designer is Aisha Greyrat.

"Aisha-nee, they have a waterfall over there!"
"Huh? Were?"
"Look, it's over there, there."
"Aah, wait Mama."

Aisha, along with Eris, Ars, and Sieg all seem excited to be in a hot spring for the first time, and are exploring their new environment.
The dark black fabric isn't see through, but it does cling, making the figure completely visible.
And they're moving all over generously exposing it.
Eris probably hasn't noticed so that's fine... And Aisha probably doesn't even care.

Well whatever.
This is a place anyone can enter.
As long as the important places are hidden it's fine.
Let those who are embarrassed be so.

Although I do hope they don't cause trouble for anyone else here.
Even here, there are manners that are necessary.

"Hey Blue Mama, you've been here before haven't you?"
"Yes, it was a long time ago."
"Tell us!"
"Sure. It was right after I had left the Magic Continent, around the time I had just graduated from being a beginner Adventurer..."

Roxy was telling a story to Lucy with Lily in her arms.
Clive was also listening in nearby.
Clive's face was bright red, probably because of Lucy's state of dress.
But it's too early for you to know those kinds of feelings Clive-kun.
Your father, nor I, will permit it at such an age.

"...And so Holy Beast-sama, this is the Saviour-sama?"
"Ruff!"
"I see!"
"..."

Lara and Leo were surrounded by Beast Races'
Lara has her usual bold expression, but she looks somewhat bothered.
It was like this in the post town as well.

"Chris-sama, If you get hot, please say. I will prepare you something to drink."
"Kaaay~..."

Lillia was washing Zenith and looking after Chris.
She was sitting with me before but she didn't like the hot water so she quickly got out.
Now she's clinging to Zenith.
Well, that's fine.

"...Aaaah! This is the best...!"
"This is the first time I've drank Dwarf liquor. It's pretty strong... But it's good."

And Sylphy, Elinalise, Cliff, Talhand, and I are all drinking together.
We bought some Dwarven liquor in the post town and chilled it.
I've never tasted anything like it before, I don't even know what it's made of, but I do know that it's good.
It goes down smoothly and as it passed your throat, gives a soft scent of flowers.
The cold penetrates your body and slowly warms you up from the inside.

"Rudy, come on, give it here. Give me a drink? Come on..."

Sylphy got drunk real quick and now she's snuggling up to me somewhat dazed.
Drunk Sylphy is as cute as ever.
So cute that you'd never expect she's a mother of two.
This isn't something to show the children.

"Right, of course."

Soaking in a hot spring, with an arm around a beautiful girl drinking together.
This is the best.
I'm in paradise.

"..."

At least I should be...

"..."

But something's been giving me shivers.

"..."

I already know the cause.
The man quietly drinking in front of me.

Talhand.
A former member of Paul's old party 『Black Wolf's Fang』 .
An S rank Adventurer currently working solo.
A capable and trustworthy man.

"..."

I have no reason to doubt him.
If he does something I can deal with it.
And I did conduct a comprehensive interview to determine if he was Hitogami's apostle.
Although there was the case with Gisu.
He calmly lied through his teeth and did whatever he wanted.
So although I can't be sure, if I start thinking like that, I won't be able to trust anyone.
I have already decided to trust Talhand.

But why.

His gaze gives me chills.

The journey to the hot spring was the same.

We were protecting the carriage the children were riding in.

Eris was the vanguard, Elinalise and I were the front with Talhand right behind us and Sylphy and Roxy were behind the carriage.

I was using earth Magic to make the carriage ride smoother but I kept getting those chills.
and whenever I looked back, Talhand was staring at me.

Well it should be obvious that since he was right behind me, and we were walking in the same direction, that when I turn around he'd be looking at me.

I was probably just nervous walking along a known Monster path with the children.

I'm just overthinking it...

But I just can't understand why his gaze gives me chills.

"Um, what is it?"

And before I knew it, I had asked him that.

"What is what?"

"I get the feeling you've been staring at me a while."

"Aah... Of course. You much resemble Paul. I have been observing."

"My father?"

"Yes, with you walking in line with Elinalise, it brings back memories of old. The back's of Elinalise, Ghislaine and Paul, Gisu and Zenith's voice behind... I am reminded of my days in the『Black Wolf's Fang』."

Talhand looks engrossed in pleasant memories as he strokes his beard.

I can't see my own back, so I don't really understand, but is that how it is.

But then, what are the chills I've been feeling.

Odd.

"Rudeus, I'd be careful if I were you, this Dwarf will drink up men too."

"Eeh."

Elinalise said that with her head on Cliff's shoulder.

Talhand looked somewhat sullen at her remark.

"Don't say things in such a way that will cause misunderstandings."

Right.

What will I do with Elinalise-san.

Can she think anything remotely pure?

This damn dirty Elf.

"I take men only."

This dirty Dwarf!

Wait...

That means the chill I felt...

He's aiming for me!?

If you lay your hands on me, Eris won't stay quiet!

She'll chop you in two!²

But then Sylphy tremblingly grabbed hold of me.
And as if to protect me, gave Talhand a stern look.

"Rest easy, I won't lay a hand on someone without interest, let alone a married man."

So he does have his morals intact.
Well I guess that's obvious.
He may be like that, but that just means his preferences are slightly different.
When you think about it that way, it's perfectly normal.

"But you've been staring at his ass this whole time haven't you?"
"It's in a man's nature to appreciate fine buttocks... You understand nay?"

Talhand looks somewhat troubled at Elinalise's inability to stop talking.

Of course, I understand what he's talking about.
I've been staring at Eris's ass as she walks around too.
Aah, Eris is looking this way.
She couldn't have felt the chills too right?

Aah, she hid her chest! She knows!
But you're hiding the wrong place! I wasn't looking at your breasts, but your ass!³

"Your resemblance to Paul is genuine... But if you possess some aversion to it, I shall cease."
"Not really, if you're just looking, go ahead."
"Hoho, then I shall take you up on that."

Talhand said that with a smile on his face and took another swig.

"How about another?"
"I think I will."

People have all kinds of tastes.
If the other party has their morals in check, there's no need to be any more wary than normal.
It's no big deal having him ogle me.
Well, Talhand is built like a bear, so I don't really think I have anything to compare to though.

"But still, I never thought you would agree to be our guide."

Elinalise suddenly said that.

"I don't understand your meaning."
"I mean, I thought you were avoiding going back to your home town.
This hot spring is in Dwarf territory isn't it?
Won't it be a problem for you if someone you know spots you?"

It seems there are some circumstances behind Talhand's past.
Now that I think about it, among Paul's ex-party members, he's the one I know the least about.
Well I guess the fact that I wasn't all that interested played a part.

"...Hah. That's rich coming from the woman who claimed it to be impossible for her to stick to one man."
"Life can change people."
"I think the same. It was a good opportunity, so I thought I would settle it."

"Oh, how manly."

"I need not your flattery. After seeing all of you, I simply thought it pathetic to have avoided my family for decades."

Talhand said that with an unpleasant look on his face and took another swig.

"Does that mean you'll be going back to your village?"

"Essentially."

"Rudeus, go ahead."

Hearing my name called, I turned around.

It took me a second to realise what she meant.

She probably realised that it would be a good opportunity for me.

But I am with my family right now, would it be a good idea to ask?

Well getting an answer now should be fine.

"Actually, I had the intention to make contact with the Ore God..."

"The Ore God?"

"Yes, or someone of that level of influence... I would like to extend an official greeting as the subordinate of the Dragon God."

I don't know what kind of standing Talhand has in his village.

Asking something like this might even get him in trouble.

So I can only hope.

"Hmm... He's a very hard person to please."

Orsted said the same thing.

That he's hard to please and hard to like.

The only things he likes are liquor, gems and raw materials that can be made into armour.

But simply gifting him a bunch of that, wouldn't be enough to make an alliance.

"Even if I ask, you might get turned down."

"Do you know him?"

"Somewhat..."

Talhand nodded while pondering.

They might be related.

When I get back I'll have to ask Orsted about it.

"I won't ask you to force anything, there are probably many things you have to consider after all."

"That's quite true..."

He took another drink in thought and let out a breath reeking of alcohol.

"I will think about it."

"I understand. I apologise for asking something unreasonable."

As I was about to bow to him, he pointed the top of the bottle at me.

"Don't apologise, just drink," is what he seemed to be telling me.

I obeyed his command and held out my cup.

Part 2

After we got out of the bath, we headed back to our rooms.

After that we had the rest of the family wait in the inn as Roxy, Talhand, Elinalise, and I went to look for somewhere to install the Teleport Formation.

We only took those used to walking through mountains.

Eris wanted to come too, but I had her stay back as a guard.

And so the four of us entered the mountain.

It was just past the inn.

Somewhere people don't come across often is ideal for a Teleport Formation.

Ariel once told me that the majors powers want to have Teleport Gates connecting them and they're currently making plans for it...

But that's still quite far off.

Lifting the taboo on Teleport Magic.

Until we know that it's a real possibility, I'll still have to keep putting my personal Formations where people can't find them.

If we go too high we'll be in Blue Dragon territory, so we still have to keep it within reachable range.

"I guess about here's fine..."

Now that we've found somewhere to set it up, it's time to make a building.

It's basically made the same as a Dragon Race relic.

Four rooms with a hidden staircase in one leading to the Teleport Formation.

I've left Roxy and Elinalise outside to keep watch.

I dig the hole with Earth Magic and begin forming the room.

I had Talhand help out with the specifications of the inside.

Nobody's going to stumble across here, but the Formation lead to the office.

So in the million to one chance someone finds it, we'd be in trouble.

And so with that in mind, I dressed it up like a real ruin so any travellers that come across it leave satisfied. I even threw in something that looked like a treasure chest.

I set it up like something along the lines of a rest stop.

It should seem like somewhere ancient travellers would be able to take a break.

Talhand was the one who made the furnishings.

He certainly lives up to the Dwarves' legacy of craftsmanship.

He crafted it all from a single huge piece of stone and even made them look appropriately worn.

By the time the sun set, the building looked like it had been standing there for over a thousand years.

"It's impressive. I don't think anyone will be able to tell."

"There aren't any plants or moss. Anybody who knows what they're doing could tell right away."

Oh.

It seems the craftsman is unsatisfied with his work.

That said, I don't think anyone will come across it that quickly.

If someone does eventually stumble across it, it should look properly aged by then.

There's nobody around to clean it after all.

"Is it even alright for us to be erecting a building here? The Dwarves have sealed it off haven't they?"

"The Dwarves treat the mountain as something of a God and buildings are considered offerings. No matter what we

build, nobody's going to complain."

Is that how it is?

Maybe I should have made the outside more gaudy instead of hiding it all underground.

The fact that the entrance leads underground basically screams that something fishy is going on.

Well I guess it's too late now.

"Since we're done here, we should head back."

"I'll be there in a second."

Finally, I activated the Formation and Teleported.

After confirming that it does in fact lead to the office, I head back.

"All good."

"..."

"If something comes up I'd be fine with you using it too Talhand-san."

"No thank you. I shall make due with my feet."

Talhand shook his head and refused.

So for now, the Teleport Formation is complete.

All that's left is to head back.

Part 3

The next day, we set out from the town early in the morning.

And here is where we parted with Cliff and Talhand.

We gave our goodbyes before getting in the carriage.

Cliff is to conduct his investigation today and return to Millishion within the next few.

"Clive, make sure you're a good boy."

"Of course!"

Cliff really didn't want to say goodbye to Clive.

It's not like they won't see each other again.

But it's always painful to part with family.

"Make sure too keep up with both your studies and training. Don't make that girl you like cry. Be kind."

"T-There's no girl I like!"

"In that case, treat everybody as kindly as you would a girl you like. Alright?"

"...Ok."

He gave Clive a good pat on the head and turned to me.

"Rudeus, I'll leave Lise and Clive to you."

"Of course. You keep at it too Cliff-senpai."

"You bet."

Cliff turned around as if no further words were necessary.

The fact that he doesn't need to say anything else is a testament to his faith in me.

And I plan to live up to it.

Well, Elinalise has everything pretty much together so there's not really much I can do.

I guess I'll just have to turn Clive into a great man for the day he asks for Lucy's hand.

...No it's not set in stone.

I'll just make sure to be there if they ever need help.

I walked towards Elinalise and Roxy who were talking to Talhand off to the side.

Apparently he's temporarily returning to Millishion.

There seems to be some sort of preparation necessary before returning to the Dwarf village.

Although I'm not sure if he needs to get something or prepare himself mentally.

"Talhand-san, I would like to thank you for your help."

"Of course."

"I wish you luck with your family and your village."

"Having Paul's son worry about me is somewhat disturbing."

Talhand gave me a good look.

I have a feeling he might be checking me out.

"I thought so yesterday too, but as long as you show the Ore God 'That' he might even be happy to meet with you."

"That'?"

"The dark hard one from yesterday."

"Eeh!?"

My hard dark what!?

Is the Ore God a homo?

Wait, I'm not that dark.

I guess I would be hard, am I? I don't have anyone to compare too.

Roxy, don't just blush, say something.

"No, it's mine," or something like that.

"Talhand if you just say his thick dark hard one, he won't understand. Be more clear."

"I didn't say thick. That one from yesterday. The big rock you made from Earth Magic. I don't know whether to call it a mineral or a crystal."

Oh the rock.

I did make a bunch of big black rocks yesterday.

I was going after toughness, so they did end up quite hard.

So he was just talking about the rock...

Oh, Roxy's face is bright red.

Hmmm? Just what were you imagining? Oh Roxy you dirty girl.

Well I was thinking the same thing though.

"If I have a sample to take with me it might help with the request."

"Sure."

I immediately conjured up a stone bar with Earth Magic.

A thick hard black one.

Of course it's quite heavy.

It's about 15cm long and probably weighs over 10kg.

If you plated it with gold you might even be able to fool someone. Although it's far harder than both gold and platinum so you'd be found out right away.

"Is this fine?"

"This is good. How many can you make?"

He eventually took five of them and after feeling out their weight, nodded.

I would think five of them would be quite heavy...

He is an experienced adventurer after all.

"Then, until the next."

Talhand gave me a nod and turned towards Roxy.

"Talhand you be carefull."

"You take care of yourself Roxy."

"Of course."

Talhand laughed.

Roxy smiled as the two friends parted.

Part 4

And so our family vacation ended without incident.

Thinking back on it, all I did was work, but it was a good trip.

I pray this was a good experience for the children and will help encourage them.

Saying it like that really doesn't suit me.

I hope they all grow up well.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1. It refers to [this](#) piece of clothing

The closest english equivalent I can think of would probably be a poncho but I felt that didn't quite fit.

2. This could also refer to "It" ;).

The more I read the more I'm sure Rudeus is a Shoujo Heroine.

3. [He expected Ass...](#)

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Chapter 19: Talhand The Clifftop

 thelordofpie.blogspot.com/2016/06/chapter-19-talhand-clifftop.html

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Part 1

『Talhand The Clifftop』 was the 37th of 51 siblings.

He was born to an ordinary Dwarf family and was constantly surrounded by his brothers and sisters.

51 of them.

Of course, they didn't all share the same mother.

Something not generally known is that in the Dwarf village, all children of the same generation are all grouped together.

I guess you could liken it to a school, but from the moment they are born, they are considered siblings until death. And so all the children live as siblings, any disparity in wealth is lost, and they can eventually transition smoothly into positions of responsibility within the village.

And among their siblings, someone will be the chief, some will be servants, and others will marry each other.

Of course, that's simply the state of this village.

Dwarves outside the village have no such custom.

Anyhow, Talhand was raised among several tens of people as siblings.

He was a normal child.

He was interested in rock and iron, he liked the smell of alcohol, and he admired blacksmiths and builders.

The only thing that might have stood out was that he seemed to like the men more than the women.

That aside, among his siblings there was one who was particularly popular.

His little brother, the 38th of 51.

His name was 『Godbard of the Splendid Heavenly Peak』 .

Godbard had a particular talent.

Once Dwarf children are of age, they are taught blacksmithing and crafts, as well as simple Earth Magic.

And amongst those, Godbard far outshone the rest.

He could use the hammer to create steel as hard as the adults, he could craft ornaments splendid enough to make you doubt your eyes, and if you showed him a building, he could immediately fix its weak points.

Dwarves live longer than humans.

Around the time that Godbard's talent was discovered, there were still those who had lived through the Laplace War.

"He's the spitting image of the late Ore God," they proclaimed.

At their recommendation he was selected as a candidate for the next Ore God and was given preferential treatment.

The other children also came to recognise him as their future leader.

It was at that point that Talhand also began to show changes.

He lost interest in smithing and crafts.

Because he knew that no matter how hard he tried, nothing he made would ever outshine Godbard.

He wasn't comparing himself to Godbard.

The adults never even looked at anything anyone other than Godbard made, so there was never even any comparison.

Did Talhand want to be number one?

No.

That wasn't it.

Then did he resent the respect shown to Godbard?

That wasn't it either.

Talhand and Godbard were quite close.

In fact, Godbard was one of his first friends.

Talhand's first love was Godbard.

When he heard that Godbard was to be the next Ore God, he was happy.

And so, Talhand thought of how he could be helpful to Godbard.

How he would make up for his deficiencies and become his right-hand man.

The conclusion he reached was Magic.

Especially, Water and Wind Magic which the Dwarves considered worthless.

The previous Ore God was a God Class Earth Mage, and using the stone he created, produced a legendary sword.

But it's also said that the reason he was able to create such an amazing sword was because of the Water and Wind talents of the Elves.

Blacksmithing is done with more than just earth and fire.

To grow fire, you need wind. To cool steel, you need water.

It's not an incorrect philosophy, but the adults of the village refused to acknowledge it.

Tradition and formality have prevented previous generations of Dwarves from excelling at Wind and Water Magic.

They would give all kinds of reasons to prevent Talhand from learning Wind and Water Magic.

In actual fact, Talhand was far better at Earth Magic than Wind or Water.

But Godbard had said, "I think it's a great idea. Those adults' heads are too hard."

Those words gave Talhand determination and further flared his admiration of Magic.

And so Talhand separated from the norm.

And because of that, he became an object of scorn among some of his siblings.

According to them, any Dwarf who couldn't work a forge, couldn't be considered a man.

And Magic should only be used to loosen bedrock, anything used in smithing should be birthed by nature.

And under their contempt, Talhand slowly advanced his studies.

It was all for the sake of Godbard.

When he became the new Ore God, he would definitely need Talhand's strength.

That's what he believed.

Even when they criticised him, ostracised him, and he became known as an eccentric madman, he continued to believe.

And then the day arrived.

The day Godbard became the Ore God.

In accordance with the succession ritual, the Ore God must craft five swords.

And for each sword he creates, he selects those he can most rely on.

The Ore God himself selects his wife and friends, those who will help him lead the village in the future.

Talhand of course, nominated himself.

He'd been training himself for this day.

But to his surprise, Godbard didn't select him.

He selected those in the village who possessed skill and his lover... And that was fine.

But his last selection was one who had berated Talhand as a lunatic, a stubborn old man.

Talhand objected.

"As if I could stand such foolishness, I worked this hard for you!" he said.

But Godbard replied,

"Can you make an actual sword?"

And of course Talhand answered,

"Of course I can, give me a chance."

Godbard gave a bitter look, but he consented.

The stubborn old man and Talhand.

They would both forge a sword in competition.

And to assure impartiality, Godbard proclaimed that only those he deemed worthy were to participate.

They gathered from all around to join.

Talhand was baffled.

He had trained his Water and Wind Magic for this moment.

But since childhood, he had done very little smithing.

He could count the number of times he made a sword on his hand.

He was at a massive disadvantage.

"Wait! I wanted to help you make swords!"

And to his plea,

"Someone who can't make their own sword, couldn't possibly understand my design. Those who don't understand can't assist me."

He was denied.

He didn't understand.

He thought there was nobody who could understand Godbard better than himself.

So why...

And so still confused, he duelled with no plan...

And lost.

And so with eyes drilling holes in his back, he left the scene.
The next day, during the succession ceremony, Talhand left the village.

Part 2

After that, Talhand continued traveling as an Adventurer.

He was almost always alone.

After the incident with Godbard, he could no longer bring himself to trust people.

After being ostracised for so long, he had no idea how to interact with others.

And his sexual inclination didn't help with that.

His smithery was at the base level a Dwarf should have, but the Magic that he had spent most of his time on was only at a reasonable level.

It only went as far a reasonable.

So he clad himself in armour and had no choice but to resign himself to something of a Magic Knight role.
But he still didn't think being a solo adventurer was that difficult of a task.

When Talhand was raised to B rank, a certain person took notice of him.

Elinalise Dragonroad.

At first, she had her eyes on his body.

She felt like eating up a Dwarven youth.

But with Talhand's sexuality, he had no interest in her.

And no amount of seduction could change that.

And when he finally got tired of her advances, he told her he was gay.

Elinalise stared at him mouth agape and the proceeded to laugh.

Talhand wasn't too pleased with that.

But he knew he would be able to part ways with the lascivious Elf.

But Elinalise never left him.

He had no idea why.

Maybe she thought she could stay out of trouble by following him around.

After that the two of them teamed up a quite a number of times.

The abilities of the fast warrior Elinalise and the heavily armoured Mage Talhand meshed well together.

He still found her irritating, but for some odd reason, it wasn't an uncomfortable sensation.

Maybe because her common sense was bound by strict rules.

Although neither of them talked about forming an official Party.

But the appearance of a single boy changed that.

Paul Greyrat.

He managed to bring together the scattered Elinalise, Talhand, Gisu and Ghyslaine and form a party.

The 『Black Wolf's Fang』 .

Their combination caused quite a stir, but that's a story for another time.

The members of 『Black Wolf's Fang』 were all those ejected from their own societies.

And although none of them matched with Talhand, they were all faithful to their desires.

Paul was especially creative in his wild thoughts.

When he heard of Talhand's preferences, he simply laughed it off and exclaimed, "So I get the women, Elinalise gets the men, and if you take whoever's left, nobody gets wasted."

Paul was an easy to understand kid and his every action would leave you wanting to sigh.

Although it didn't seem as if he acted without restraint.

He possessed some amount of common sense.

Even when he was publicly labelled a playboy, he continued to live how he wanted as if he couldn't care less.

Paul's way of life opened Talhand's eyes.

Paul's actions gave the 『Black Wolf's Fang』 quite the bad reputation, but it was fun nonetheless.

Whenever Paul did something befitting of his name, he would give a hearty Dwarven laugh.

Talhand's feelings for Paul, while similar to love, were decidedly different.

It was most likely faith.

For the first time in his life, he had companions he could trust.

But that trust was broken.

Zenith joining the party had destroyed his reliance on them.

Paul, who had run around uninhibited until now, began to act with common sense to conform with what Zenith expected.

You could consider it Paul growing as a person.

But Paul made one mistake right at the end.

The upheaval caused by Paul's marriage to Zenith left a scar on each of the members hearts.

In hindsight, it may have only been a small thing.

But it resolved Talhand to never join another party again.

After that, Talhand continued on alone, and before long, the Fitoa Annihilation Event occurred.

He was reunited with Elinalise, met Roxy, and together with the two of them, his aversion towards groups diminished...

But his sentiment didn't extend to Paul.

He met back up with Paul on his return from the Magic Continent.

And the man he met, was no longer the unruly child he once knew.

He was a man, a father, desperately searching for his family.

Talhand knew he had changed, that he had grown up.

He first met Paul's son in the Begarrito Continent.

Rudeus Greyrat.

He had assumed he would be some lazy arrogant brat just like his father, but he was a surprisingly dependable kid.

But seeing how Paul had matured it wasn't all that strange.

Paul and Rudeus.

Seeing the two of them caused Talhand's chest to tighten.

He didn't know why.

And then Paul died.

It was too quick of an end.

He received quite the shock.

But seeing the far greater impact it had on Rudeus, he was hesitant to let it show.

So he drank his sorrows away as calm as he always was.

After that he left the Begarrito Continent and met Paul's son's family.

The son of the flagrant womaniser Paul, had actually started his own family.

So after erecting a grave for Paul and having a drink in his honour, he left Sharia on a journey.

It was then that something inside Talhand was over.

Something that had been with him since he became an Adventurer.

Part 3

One day, in his emptiness, a thought came to Talhand.

That he should learn to blacksmith.

He couldn't tell why he thought that.

But throughout his journey towards the Asura Kingdom, he took up jobs in smithies alongside his work as an Adventurer as training.

Because of Gisu's gambling, he had lost most of his fortune.

And to earn a little more money, when he reached the Millis Continent, he took a break from his travels.

He started smithing with all of his magic at his disposal.

Fire, Earth, Water and Wind.

He made swords, he made gauntlets, he made shields, he made swords, he made armour, he made helmets, and he made swords.

And through that, he somehow began to understand what Godbard had said to him all those years ago.

Some things just can't be conveyed through words. The tempo, the timing, the force, he began to get a feel for all these things.

His skill rapidly increased.

The intricacies of Godbard's forgery were burning in his mind.

And his knowledge from his time as an adventurer about what kinds of equipment outperformed others played a big part.

The way he used Magic was far from that his village taught.

Eventually, people who would buy his wares appeared.

The Rudo Mercenaries.

Because he was acquainted with Rudeus, that branch became his sponsor.

And because of that, eventually he was able to set up his own shop.

But, as always, his actions didn't have any purpose to himself.

His part time Adventures, playing teacher to apprentices, none of it had any meaning.

What finally changed that was when Rudeus brought his entire family over from Sharia.

Paul's son, could stand on the same level as the Latria house.

When he saw that, he knew.

He finally understood.

That he had to return to his village.

That he had to overturn the decision on that day.

That's why he was smithing.

Part 4

After getting the rod of black rock from Rudeus, Talhand returned to his store.

He had always thought that if he had the ability, that was the kind of stone he would make.
What was once a dream, was now possible through all the training he had put himself through.

“...”

The first step was to powderise the rock from Rudeus with hammer and Magic.
Then mix in iron sand and heat it.
And using Earth and Wind Magic to achieve temperatures unimaginable with a conventional furnace, raise the heat.

Both the Shingane and the Tamahagane¹ would be made of Rudeus's rock and the iron sand.
The ratio would be different, but the basic process the same.
He could have used Red Dragon scales or Hydra bones to produce an even stronger sword, but Talhand wouldn't use any of that.
There wouldn't be any point.

He began to slowly forge the sword, and after an entire night without rest, he began the tempering process.
Slowly but surely, he poured the epitome of his magic and willpower into the sword.

The result: a single blade.

It was a hard black sword.
It had no special decorations and no special effects.
But Talhand was satisfied. He made a scabbard, wrapped it in a first class cloth, and placed it on his back.
After putting the remaining black rocks in his bag, he set off from Millishion.

His destination: the Dwarf village.

Part 5

Even after so long, nothing had changed about the Dwarf village.

The village was built from stone at the base of a cliff.
The sound of hammering iron could be heard even through its thick stone walls.
Talhand made it through the entrance without much difficulty.
He was no longer part of the village, but he was still a Dwarf.
Dwarves regularly left and entered the village so the watch wasn't particularly mindful.

“...”

In the side of the cliff there was a huge hole and out of it came a system of pulleys.
Half naked men drenched in sweat carried coal and ore out from the mine and the women brought massive sacks of steamed potatoes on both shoulders to the rest stop near the outside.
Talhand felt a sense of nostalgia at the sight.
As if time had been frozen from the moment he left the village.

The only thing that had changed was the number of people he didn't recognise.
Although he drew some quizzical gazes walking about, the amount that looked at him with disdain were few.
Most of them didn't know him or didn't think anything of him.
Talhand didn't let any of that bother him and headed straight for the Patriarch's residence.
he only had one aim.

“...It's been some time 『Clifftop』 What did you come here for?”

But of course, there were those that knew him.
Standing in his way was one of his brothers.
The man who had laughed at Talhand all those years ago and was chosen as the confidant of the Ore God.

"I've come to see the Ore God."
"Know your place, as if he would meet with one such as yourself."
"..."

Talhand said nothing and removed the sword from his back.
He unfastened the cloth and the instant he removed the sword from its scabbard, the man was shocked breathless.
Because underneath was a jet black sword blade.
So dark it was as if it would absorb all light, but it wasn't eerie, instead it possessed a kind of enlightening arrogance.
It was a thing of beauty.

"Just what is this...?"
"I forged it."
"Impossible..."

In Dwarven smithing, swords showed everything.
An excellent Dwarf could produce an excellent sword.
Therefore, he couldn't believe that it was something Talhand created.

"I am here to present."

The Ore God is renowned throughout the world as the greatest blacksmith and is the pride of the Dwarven race.
And as such, whenever a fellow blacksmith produces a work to a degree of quality, he has an obligation to inspect it.
Of course, anything not up to standard would immediately be turned away by any inspecting Dwarves.
And the man in front of him was doing just that.

"..."

He didn't like Talhand.
But swords didn't lie.
The black sword in front of him possessed no special features and wasn't crafted with any special techniques.
But, it was hard. Extremely hard.
No half hearted battle could damage it.
That made it an excellent blade.
Any who calls himself a dwarf couldn't lie about this sword.

"I give you permission. You may proceed, Talhand Clifftop."
"I give my thanks, Dotol Flamesteel."

Talhand recalled his old brother's name, bowed his head and resealed his sword.

On his path to the Ore God, Talhand encountered the same thing many times.
But when they saw the sword, none barred his path.

Part 6

The memories of the esteemed 『Ore God』 Godbard regarding Talhand had somewhat faded.
It was only natural.

Many years had passed since Talhand had left the village.

"You've grown old, Talhand."

"Speak for yourself."

"I thought you would have died in the middle of nowhere a long time ago."

"I had intended to."

The two exchanged only a short greeting.

Off to Godbard's side was his wife and right-hand man.

With the return of the village's biggest madman, their vigilance was plain to see.

But there was no such thing between Talhand and Godbard.

Talhand had decided to face Godbard with a calm heart.

"..."

"..."

But Godbard didn't have any intention to talk.

There was so many things that could be said.

About his experiences outside the village.

But words were unnecessary.

Talhand wordlessly took out the sword.

Godbard, still silently, removed it from its scabbard and marvelled at the blade.

"...Hoo."

Godbard's response was overflowing with admiration.

He brought the sword up to his face to study.

"This blade holds great faith... There is neither wavering nor naivety, but the inexperience can be spotted. Given the same materials and construction, I could craft a better blade."

Talhand smiled.

Of course he was happy.

No matter how hard Talhand had worked at smithing in these last few years, he couldn't catch up to the Ore God who had been diligently studying for over a hundred years.

That much was obvious.

"...Haha."

"What's so funny?"

But that's not why.

That wasn't why at all.

"So you want to know the materials and construction?"

"Of course. It's a curious sword."

Explaining the materials and construction behind presented swords was not a rare occurrence.

To place a reason on why swords are ever even presented, It would be to leave behind the method of creation.

What materials were used, how it was made and the thought behind it.

There are many who want to leave behind such things in history.

"The base material was a rock created through Earth Magic.

It was ground up and mixed with iron sand.

And I melted it with a combination of Fire and Wind Magic.
After that, I forged and tempered it like any other sword and cooled it with Water Magic."
"A stone made from Earth Magic..."

Those words caused Godbard to suddenly remember something.
He had heard that method before.
Years ago, a crazy friend had told him about it over and over.

"Is this payback?"
"No. I simply thought to settle our score."
"...Did you think that, once I saw this sword, I'd tell you to come back?"
"No. You've already told me what I wanted to hear. That's more than enough."

That Godbard could create a better sword.
With that alone, he was satisfied.
He could feel a weight lifted off his shoulders.

Of course, with the same materials, and the same method, he could create a better sword.
But without Magic, you wouldn't be able to melt or break the stone, and no normal water could be used to cool it at that temperature.
And so, without someone able to use such Magic to a sufficient level...

Although, the genius in front of him, even without Talhand's method, could probably come up with some way to skilfully refine the stone.

"So, this 『Stone』, did you craft it yourself?"
"...No. The son of an old friend created it for me."

He pulled out the three rods of rock from his backpack and lined them up in front of Godbard.
Godbard picked up one of the rocks and felt its weight.
He tried to break it in half to get a look at the cross section, and when he couldn't do that, he pulled out a hammer and attempted to smash it, but couldn't even manage a dent.
He was baffled at the hardness of the rod.
He suddenly got excited at the thought of using the rock to make something.
A smile floated to his face.

Talhand nodded, satisfied with the reaction.
Godbard was still as easy to read as he was in his childhood.

"Several days from now the one who made those will be coming to request an audience."
"
"Would you be willing to meet with him?"

Talhand sounded somewhat fond speaking of Rudeus.
He had now achieved his goal.
He had delivered his message.

Now all he had to do was wait for the man who gave him his task.

"He might look somewhat unreliable, and he'll probably bring with him some unreasonable request...
But he's a man with guts. You won't lose anything meeting him.
I'll swear it on that sword."

Godbard eyed the sword and stones.
His wife and confidant by his side seemed to have their own thoughts but decided against voicing them.

Talhand was far beyond their expectations.
Probably partially due to the magician that made the stones.
Their curiosity was peaked.

"Fine then. His name?"
"Rudeus Greyrat."
"Understood."

Godbard etched that name into his mind.

Once Talhand was sure of it, he stood up.
It was only a spoken promise, but that was more than enough.
Godbard wasn't one to break his promises.
Once, Talhand may not have thought that way, but what he did back then, was no broken promise.
Only Talhand's inexperience.

"You're leaving?"
"Yes."
"After your display, nobody would have any complaints with you staying."
"I have a shop in Millishion. I'll probably be there as long as I live."

With those parting words, Talhand left the Ore God's residence.
While he had been inside, it had already been surrounded by his once siblings.
Their sharp gazes not hiding their desire to scrutinise him.

"Excuse me, but I'm going through."
They opened a path where he walked.
And among those eyes filled with bewilderment and scorn, Talhand headed for the exit.
Nobody called back to him.
Nobody chased after him.
But Talhand's steps were light and his heart was clear.

The curse had finally been undone.

The fact that the Ore God traded his loyalty to the Dragon God for a large amount of rocks was a story for another time.

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Translator Notes and References

1. Japanese sword making terms referring to the different steels for core and the blade of the sword. [Video for reference](#). (It's not the most informative, but it is the most interesting.)

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